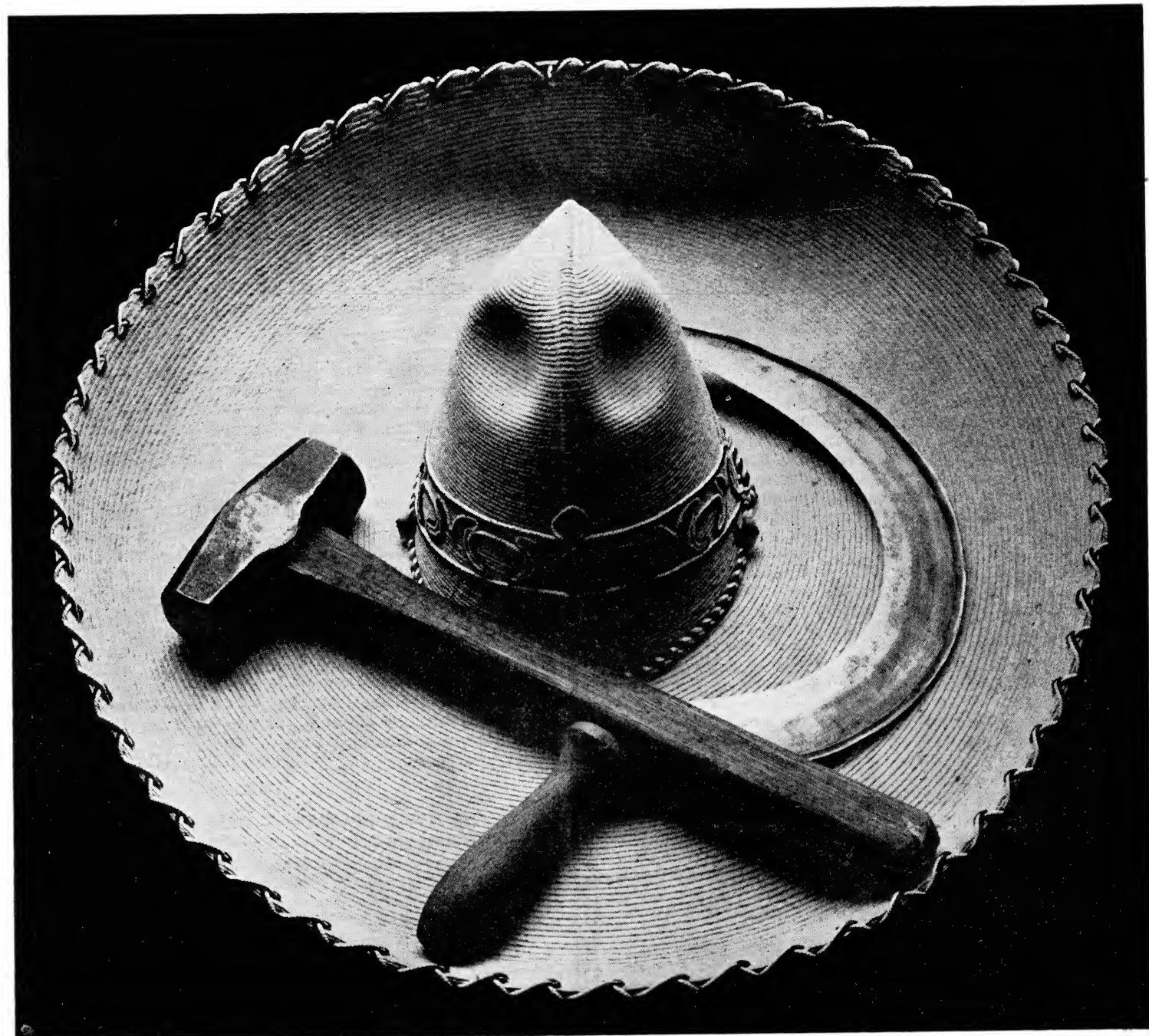


NEW **MASSES**



A Photograph by Tina Modotti

Soldier of Christ | The Right to Death!
Did God Make Bedbugs? | Awake, Negro Poets!
The Greatest Living Criminal

15 CENTS

OCTOBER, 1928

FROM OUR FRIENDS AND FOES

IT'S A CORKER

By all means renew my subscription; enclosed is my check. The NEW MASSES under its present management is great. It was rescued just in time from leaning too much toward art for art's sake. The June issue is a corker—a real healthy proletarian publication. My congratulations and best wishes.

San Francisco, Cal.

ROSALIE TODD.

STILL ON THE BUM

Dear Mike:

Still on the bum and still looking for work. And my God, how I have looked. Sure glad to see the NEW MASSES is still with us. The new form is better than the old one. Don't let the magazine die; Labor couldn't afford to lose it.

Los Angeles, Cal.

DAVE GOODWIN.

A SOUTH AFRICAN FRIEND

Dear Comrades:

For the past seven months it has been my privilege to read your delightful revolutionary journal. Its virility is most refreshing, and I have no hesitation in proclaiming it and the British *Labor Monthly* the two best radical periodicals now published in the English language.

My single copy has passed through many enthusiastic hands, and I want to create a circulation for you in South Africa. Yours is a paper which merits a large and universal circulation. As an old worker in the revolutionary movement I want to see the NEW MASSES survive and become a potent force in the rebel world and I am more than willing to do my bit. I will make a start by taking a bundle order of 12 copies of each issue, and I am certain I will be taking a much larger supply shortly.

Can you obtain for me a copy of the book by Michael Gold, from which *Jews Without Money* in your June issue is an extract?

Long life and prosperity to the NEW MASSES and all good wishes to the staff and contributors.

Fraternally yours,

Johannesburg, South Africa.

C. FRANK GLASS.

FROM AN ELEVATOR RUNNER

I am a reader of your magazine, I buy it at newsstands because I cannot afford to send you a subscription. I am running an elevator and making so little that I can barely live and support my wife and baby.

My bosses are very kind when you are not asking them for a raise in salary, they love us workers and give us their old shoes and shirts to wear. Yes, mine is so kind that last month he offered me his Paris garters which was very venerably aged and used to the limit—but it was enclosed in a beautiful new box which probably accounted for my gratefulness before opening it!

My boss is very kind, he even engaged a manager to modernize our Store, and this manager fired two old employes of over 30 years standing . . . and he also organized a system of spying. He is instigating one worker against another . . . and he has lied and insulted us . . . and suppressed free speech, and all friendly sentiment between the workers. He has so petrified the premises that nobody can whisper anymore. We workers in the store have our hearts full of prayers for this human Rat.

Well, so much for my troubles. Your July number was splendid—this kind of magazine is the only solace workers like myself have.

New York City.

JOHN LUKAS.

BLACK BREAD AND FISH

Dear Comrades:

We Finnish robots here in Rhode Island cannot digest our black bread and fish without the NEW MASSES. The Gargantuan ignorance among our Hopeless Valleyites is so amazing that you can't get a decent paper or magazine in the whole state. The only rebel here is the cow who turns Paavo Nurmi now and then when they butcher her mooing calf. Coolidge prosperity has pauperized us so we are forced to get copies of your excellent paper retail, instead of subscribing. That's why I am only sending you stamps for the July and August numbers.

Comradely yours,
Hope Valley, R. I.

LEO DROCKLLA.

HE DISAPPROVES

Please discontinue sending me the NEW MASSES. It is not as practical as the *New York Times* to wrap refuse in and of little other use. So far as constructive intelligent radicalism is concerned such as the *Freeman* exhibited during its short but distinguished life, it is as fertile as a particularly stupid man with a crying, self-pitying jag.

New York City. JOHN COGGESHALL.

FROM A LIBERAL CATHOLIC

Glad to note the NEW MASSES is still on earth; had been informed of its demise. And now, happily, it bobs up again, better than ever. I purchase two copies a month on the newsstands, and shall see my friends get to know it.

The poetry of Martin Russak is splendid. Encourage this youth in his literary venture.

I am a Catholic (Liberalist), and a nurse, also. Am serving God's poor, among the destitute cancerous patients at Rosary Hill Home, which was founded by the late Rev. Mother Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, O.S.D. She was a convert to Catholicism, and a daughter of the writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Wishing you abundant success,
Hawthorne, N. Y. GEORGE R. MACK (Nurse).

N. M. IS CHEAP, UGLY, SENSATIONAL!

Dear Michael Gold:

I had not read the NEW MASSES for a few months, and when I picked it up on a newsstand, I almost dropped dead. My first impression was that your paper was going bankrupt.

I reminded myself of the time when I was a lad and had read those yellow ten-cent paper-covered copies of terrible tragedies, picturing bloody murders on the front covers, and titles and sub-titles such as "The Great Green Skeleton" or "Who Killed the Armagharonifimidor." Just cheap sensationalism. For example, *The Graphic*. If this is the only method with which you can appeal to the American Public, well—you can draw your own conclusions. For a paper which is called "a magazine of art and labor," I have a hell of a time finding the art, although the labor is there in full swing.

Art is not featured in sewers, and if you think it is you may inhale the stench, not I. Just bring back the NEW MASSES of October, 1927, of January, 1928, and I will be perfectly content. Up to the present time of writing, the public's opinion of art has not changed as yet, and it will take a far greater force than the NEW MASSES to change it.

If a cheap, coarse, ugly, sensational piece of trash, in your opinion is considered Art, you have indeed attained success in your achievement. Accept my compliments.

From a lover of Freedom and Truth.
New York City.

HARRY WALDMAN.

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DID GOD MAKE BEDBUGS-?

(From a Book of East Side Memoirs)

By MICHAEL GOLD

It rained, we squatted dull as frogs on the steps of the rear tenement. What boredom in the backyard, we didn't know what to do with ourselves. Life seemed to flicker out on a rainy day.

The rain was warm and sticky; it spattered on the tin roofs like a gangster's blood. It filled our backyard with a smell of decay, as if someone had just dumped a ton of rotten apples.

Rain, rain! The sky was a strip of gray tin above the terraced clotheslines, on which flowery shirts and underwear flapped like flags in the rain. I looked up at them.

I heard the hum of the sewing machines in my father's little shop, a dreary sound like surf on a lonely island. A feeble baby wept, and its mother answered hoarsely. The swollen upper half of a fat woman hung from a window, above two elbows like hams. She stared for hours with dull eyes at the rain.

A decaying wooden shack occupied a fair portion of the yard; it was the common toilet. A bearded man in suspenders went in there.

There was nothing to do. Masha sang from the next tenement yard, she was a blind young prostitute girl. The deep sad Russian songs helped her pain, she was homesick for Kiev. The other girls often sang with her, many nights I was soothed to sleep by that lullaby, but now she sang alone, drearily.

Because there was nothing to do. Rain, rain, we had tired of our marbles, our jacks and playing store games.

The backyard was a curious spot. It had once been a graveyard, and some of the old American headstones had been used to pave our Jewish yard. The inscriptions were dated a hundred years ago, but we knew them all, and were tired of weaving romances around the ruins of America.

Once we had torn up a white gravestone. What an adventure. We scratched like ghouls with our hands deep into the earth until we found mouldy dirty human bones. What a thrill that was. I owned chunks of knee bone, and yellow forearms, and parts of a worm-eaten skull. I had them cached in a secret corner of my father's dark shop, wrapped in burlap with other treasured playthings.

But it would be boring to dig for bones now. And we were sick of trying to sail paper boats in the standing pool above the drain pipe. It was choked with muck, too sluggish for real boat races.

Then a cat appeared in the rain and macabre gloom of the yard. We were suddenly alert as flies.

It was an East Side gutter cat, its head was gaunt, its bones jutted sharply like parts of a strange machine. It was sick. Its belly dragged on the ground, it was sick with a new litter. It paused before a garbage can, sniffing out food.

We yelled. In slow agony, its dim eyes cast about, as if searching for a friend. The sick, starved mother-cat suspected our sudden whoops of savage joy. It leaped on a garbage can and waited.

It did not hump its back, it was too weary to show anger or fear. It waited.

And then we pursued it like fiends, pelting it with offal. It scrambled hysterically up the fence, we heard it drop on heavy feet into the next yard—where other children sat in the rain.

2. TOO MANY CATS

There is nothing in this incident that ought to be recorded. There were thousands of cats on the East Side; one of the commonplace joys of childhood was to torture cats, chase them, drop them from steep roofs to see whether cats really had nine lives.

It was a world of violence and stone, there were too many cats, there were too many children.

The stink of cats filled the tenement halls. Cats fought around each garbage can in the East Side struggle for life. These cats were not the smug purring pets of the rich, but outcasts, criminals and fiends. They were hideous with scars and wounds, their fur was torn, they were smeared with unimaginable sores and filth, their eyes glared dangerously. They were so desperate they would sometimes fight a man. At night they alarmed the tenement with their weird cries like a congress of crazy witches. The obscene heartbreak of their amours ruined our sleep, made us cry and toss in cat nightmares. We tortured them, they tortured us. It was poverty.

When you opened the door of your home there was always a crazy cat or two trying to claw its way inside. They would lie for days outside the door, brooding on the smell of cooking until they went insane.

Kittens died quietly in every corner, rheumy-eyed, feeble and old before they had even begun to learn to play.

Sometimes Mommer let you pity a kitten, give it a saucer of milk which it lapped madly with its tiny tongue.

But later you had to drive it out again into the cruel street. There were too many kittens. The sorrow of kittens was too gigantic for one child's pity.

I had chased and persecuted cats with the other children; I had never had much pity; but on this rainy afternoon I pitied the poor mother-cat.

I found myself thinking: Did God make cats?

3. THE RIOT IN A CHAIDER

I was oppressed with thoughts of God then because my parents had put me in a Chaider. I went to this Jewish religious school every afternoon when the American public school let out.

There is no hell fire in the orthodox Jewish religion. Children are not taught to harrow themselves searching for sin; nor to

fear the hereafter. But they must memorize a long rigmarole of Hebrew prayers.

Reb Moisha was my teacher. This man was a walking, belching symbol of the decay of orthodox Judaism, for what could such as he teach anyone? He was ignorant as a rat. He was a foul-smelling emaciated beggar who had never read anything, or seen anything, or felt anything, who knew absolutely nothing but this sterile memory course in dead Hebrew which he whipped into the heads and backsides of little boys.

He dressed always in the same long black alpaca coat, green and disgusting with its pattern of grease, snuff, old food stains and something worse; for this religious teacher had nothing but contempt for the modern device of the handkerchief. He blew his nose on the floor, then wiped it on his horrible sleeve. Pickled herring and onions were his standard food; the sirocco blast of a thousand onions poured from his beard when he bent over the Aleph-Beth with you, his face close and hot to yours.

He was cruel as a jailer. He had a sadist's delight in pinching the boys with his long pincer fingers; he was always whipping special offenders with his cat-o-nine-tails; yet he maintained no real discipline in his hellhole of Jewish piety.

I was appalled when my parents brought me there, and after paying Reb Moisha his first weekly fee of fifty cents, left me with him.

In the ratty old loft, lit by a gas jet that cast a charnelhouse flare on the strange scene, I beheld thirty boys leaping and rioting like so many tigers pent in the one cage.

Some were spinning tops; others played tag, or wrestled; a group kneeled in a corner, staring at the ground as though a corpse lay there, and screaming passionately. They were shooting craps.

One of these boys saw me. He came over, and without a word, tore the picture button of W. J. Bryan from my lapel. The boys gambled in buttons.

At a long table, hacked by many knives, Reb Moisha sat with ten surly boys, the beginner's class, and soon I was howling with them. Over and over again we howled the ancient Hebrew prayers for thunder and lightning and bread and death; meaningless sounds to us. And Reb Moisha would pinch a boy, and scream above the bedlam, "Louder, little thieves! Louder!" He forced us to howl.

There was a smell like dead dog from the broken toilet in the hall. A burlap curtain hung at one end of the hall to disguise the master's home, for he was the unlucky father of five children. His wife's harpy voice nagged them; we could smell onions frying; always onions for the master.

His face was pale, peaked, sinister, like a corpse's; it was framed in an inkblack beard; he wore a skullcap; his eyes glittered, and roved restlessly like an ogre's hungry for blood of little boys.

I did not like this place. Once he tried to whip me, and instead of the usual submission, I ran home. My mother was angry.

"You must go back," she said. "Do you want to grow up into an ignorant Goy, a Christian?"

"But why do I have to learn all those Hebrew words? They don't mean anything, Mommer!"

"They mean a lot," said my mother severely. "Those are God's words, the way He wants us to pray to Him, in Hebrew."

"Who is God?" I asked. "Why must we pray to Him?"

"He is the one who made the world," said my mother solemnly. "We must obey Him."

"Did He make *everything*?"

"Yes, everything. God made everything in this world."

This impressed me, I returned to the chaider, and in the midst of the riot and screaming I would brood on my mother's God, on the strange man in the sky who must be addressed in Hebrew, that man who had created everything in the world.

4. GOD IS A JEW

My mother was very pious; her face grew solemn and mysterious when she talked about her God. Everyone argued about God. Mendel Bum, and Fyfka the Miser, and my Aunt Lena, and Jake Wolf, the saloonkeeper, and the fat janitor woman, and Mrs. Rifkin, of the umbrella store, my mother's best friend, and Motteke Blinder, and Harry the Pimp—all were interested in God. It was an important subject, and when I discovered this, it became important for me, too.

(This Jewish God! Chief of a tribe of desert fanatics, moody tyrant, dictator, sadistic king who loved the smoke of innocent blood, of burning cities!

(You were a mighty captain on the hills of Palestine, you told the Jews they were your chosen people, you promised them the earth, you led them to victory and injustice!

(You were their strong God, and then you failed them. They became the dregs of the nations. They lived in the cellars of the world.

(But they CLUNG TO YOU! They did not reproach their Judas. They built synagogues to their pale shrunken defeated ghetto God. They were martyrs for you, Viper!)

(But that was in Europe. This is America, end of the centuries, here you are fated to perish at last!)

Meyer Sheftel, was a pale lonely young immigrant, one of my father's three workers, with a dangly head and blue protruding nearsighted eyes. He was always in a daze. He shambled about, his clothes flapping on his scrawny skeleton. He was always reading, reading. A Russian book was propped against the head of his machine, and even while he worked, he was reading.

Once, from this abstraction, he leaped up with a scream of pain. He had run the needle through his finger. A doctor was called, it was a painful operation. But Meyer, his finger bandaged, went on reading hungrily that same afternoon. It was life to him.

My father and his friends respected Meyer because he read so much. They assured each other he was very wise. What he was reading, or what he thought, no one knew. He rarely spoke; and this silence made him the more impressive.

One day a funny thing happened in the shop. Motteke popped in the door, dragging Mendel Bum by the coat. They had been arguing about God in the saloon; cross-eyed Motteke was all asweat with emotion. His face of a gentle gargoyle was purple with excitement.

"Meyer," he said, puffing indignantly, "we want you to decide a bet. You have read books, you know things. This Mendel, this bum, he says that there is no God. And I say there is. So we have bet a quarter."

The student's pale face flushed faintly. He was embarrassed because we were looking at him.

"Well," he stammered.

Mendel, that rogue, grinned and winked at my father, as if he had already won the bet.

"Well," the young student began, "I think so, that is to say: I think there is a God."

Motteke laughed, he showed his yellow stumps, then he slapped Mendel on the shoulder.

"Nu, free thinker," he crowed, "hand me over the quarter!" But Mendel went on arguing, he shrugged his shoulders.

5. A HORSE NAMED GANUF

I couldn't get the thought out of my head; it was God who made everything. A child carries such thoughts about him unconsciously, the way he carries his body; they burrow and grow inside him. He sits quietly; no one knows why; he himself doesn't know; but he is thinking. Then one day he will speak.

In the livery stable on our street there was an old truck horse I loved. Every night he came home weary from work, but they would not unhitch him at once, he would be made to wait for hours in the street by Vashka.

He was hungry, and that's why he'd steal apples or bananas from the pushcarts if the peddler was napping. He was kicked and beaten for this, but it did not break him of his bad habit. They should have fed him after a day's work, but he was always neglected, and dirty, fly-bitten, gall-ridden. He was nicknamed the Ganuf—the old Thief on our street.

I stole sugar from my home and gave it to him. I stroked his damp nose, and gray flanks, or gray tangled mane, and he shook his head, and stared at me with his large gentle eyes. He never shook his head for the other boys, they marvelled at my power over Ganuf.

He was a kind, good horse, and wise in many ways. For instance: Jim Bush abused him. Jim Bush was a fiery little Irish cripple who lived by doing odd jobs for the prostitute girls. Jim Bush was a tough guy from the waist up. His blue fireman's shirt covered massive shoulders and arms; his face was red and leathery like a middle-aged cop's; but his legs were shrivelled like a baby's.

He cracked dirty jokes with the girls, he was genial when sober, but when he was drunk he wanted to fight everyone. He would leap from his crutches at a man's throat and hang there like a bulldog, squeezing for death with his powerful hands, until beaten into unconsciousness. He always began his pugnacious debauches by abusing Ganuf the Horse.

He seemed to hate Ganuf. Why, I don't know. Maybe to show his power. He was the height of a boy of seven. He stood there, eyes bloodshot with liquor, mouth foaming, and shouted curses at

the horse. Ganuf moved; Jim struck him over the nose with a crutch.

Jim grabbed the bridle; "back up!" he yelled, then he sawed the bit on poor Ganuf's tongue. Then he clutched the horse's nostrils and tried to tear them off.

The poor horse was patient. He looked down from his great height at the screaming little cripple, and seemed to understand. He would have kicked anyone else, but I think he knew Jim Bush was a cripple.

People always marvelled at this scene. I used to feel sorry for my poor horse, and imagine there were tears in his eyes.

This horse dropped at work one summer day. They loosened his harness, and slopped buckets of water over him. He managed to stand up, but was weak. He dragged the truck back to the stable. Waiting there for his supper, he fell gasping; he died on our street.

His body bloated like a balloon, and he was left there until the wagon could come to haul him to the boneyard.

When a horse lay dead in the street that way, he was seized upon to become another plaything in the queer and terrible treasury of East Side childhood.

Children gathered around Ganuf. They leaped on his swollen body, poked sticks in the vents. They pried open the eyelids, speculated on those sad, glazed big eyes. They plucked hair from the tail with which to weave good-luck rings.

The fat blue and golden flies swarmed, too, around the body of my kind old friend. They buzzed and sang with furious joy as they attacked this tremendous meal sent them by the God of Flies.

I stood there helplessly. I wanted to cry for my poor old Ganuf. Had God made Ganuf? Then why had He let Ganuf die? And had God made flies?

The millions of East Side flies, that drove us crazy in summer, and sucked at our eyelids while we slept, drowned in our glass of milk?

Why?

6. DID GOD MAKE BEDBUGS?

Did God make bedbugs? One steaming hot night, I couldn't sleep for the bedbugs. They have a peculiar nauseating smell of their own; it is the smell of poverty. They crawl slowly and pompously, bloated with blood, and the touch and smell of these parasites wakens every nerve to disgust.

(Bedbugs are what people mean when they say: Poverty. There are enough pleasant superficial liars writing in America. I will write a truthful book of Poverty; I will mention bedbugs.)

It wasn't a lack of cleanliness in our home. My mother was as clean as any German housewife; she slaved, she worked herself to the bone keeping us fresh and neat. The bedbugs were a torment to her. She doused the beds with kerosene, changed the sheets, sprayed the mattresses frantically. What was the use; nothing could help; it was Poverty; it was the Tenement.

The bedbugs lived and bred in the rotten walls of the tenement, with the rats, fleas, roaches; the whole rotten structure needed to be torn down; a kerosene bottle would not help.

It had been a frightful week of summer heat. I was sick and feverish with heat, and pitched and tossed, while the cats sobbed in the yard. The bugs finally woke me. They were everywhere. I cannot tell the despair, loathing and rage of the child in the dark tenement room, as they crawled on me, and stank.

I cried softly. My mother woke and lit the gas. She renewed her futile battle with the bedbugs. The kerosene smell choked me. My mother tried to soothe me back to sleep. But my brain raced like a sewing machine.

"Mommer," I asked, "why did God make the bedbugs?"

She laughed at her little boy's quaint idea. I was often jollied about it later, but who has yet answered this question? Was it the God of Love who put pain and poverty into the world? Why, a kind horse like my Ganuf would never have done such a thing.

COLOR TONES

Force is gray-black
Revolt is red
The city is gray-black
And the mass is gray-red
The machine is gray-black
And its wheels are red
Mass power is gray-black, gray-red, red
And that is the strength of revolt.

HELEN KOPPEL.



Drawn by Saul Yalkert.

THE DISTURBER

The movie was about a poor slob chauffeur who loved his master's beautiful daughter. We gasped, bawled, beat our breasts, and were surprised when we sensed one in our midst who didn't sympathize with the aspiring young hero. Following other annoyed glances my eyes fixed on a youngish chap slumped in his seat. I caught a glimpse of his face, expressionless, but queer clothes he wore intrigued us, and we were unable to pay unadulterated homage to the famous stars of the silver sheet. Yes; among us sat a person in gray blouse and pants, these unrelieved by color except for red ribbon across left chest. Eyes sunken and thoughtful, lips enigmatic and tight. "Garbage sweeper?" a buxom matron inquired. "Don't know," I snarled. "He's just pulled a hanky cleaner than mine," protested a stenog at my right. I tried, and the good people around me tried, to follow the far-trumpeted movie. Alas! this motionless fellow in shapeless clothes had captured our attention. Somebody shied spitballs at him. No movement. Now, on the screen, the hero clasped his high-born dearly beloved. We yelled, cheered, all but one who slumped still farther down in his seat and yawned. I was enraged. I recalled hearing at our last Rotary meeting of disaffected persons who didn't like anything truly American, taking a snobbish attitude toward native productions; we growled as the lecturer proceeded, and it sounded ominous to me. The feature came to a beautiful end; chauffeur moved into a suite in the great house, and was to be given the master's daughter in honorable marriage. Our applause was a thing never to forget, except to one person; of course the chap in gray blouse wasn't impressed one bit. "Heehee!" he laughed, in a coarse undignified manner. Forgetting my training as an American gentleman I shouted: "Who the hell are you?" He half rose. On his lap I glimpsed a cap with a five-point star that seemed to be burning angrily. Instinctively a woman of delicate sensibilities fainted at sight of him. In staccato, foreign-accented tones, glittering with contempt for me, he said: "I am a Bolshevik soldier."

GEORGE JARRBOE.



Drawn by Saul Yalkert.

COAL MINERS' CHILDREN

By ED FALKOWSKI

Little Johnny was scarcely twelve when his mother took him up to the priest's. "Father, the boy is big enough to work," she said.

Father, picking his teeth diligently with a dull tooth-pick, gave a sucking sound. "But is the boy old enough?"

"That's got to be fixed up, Father. Only me man workin'. Why, what're we to do? Four little ones aroun' the house."

The priest shook his large head. "Not so good," he grumbled.

But mother struggled and argued and pled, and finally the comfortable looking Father sat down and wrote out a birth-certificate that made Johnny of work-age.

Mother, wiping a tear out of her eye with soiled handkerchief, handed the priest a crumpled dollar bill which he pocketed with professional ease. "Thank you, thank you!" she cried.

Johnny, looking rather embarrassed, watched the Priest slip the crumpled greenback into his capacious pocket, and studied the smile that played over his big face.

Mother kissed her son many times as they left the chilly office of the church, and made for home. "Now, Johnny," said mother—"You can go out and look for work. You're old enough."

Thus magically the boy became old enough to get a job. A twinge of fear seized his young heart and squeezed it together as he looked at the grinding breaker. Huge, sulky, grim, it ground on, its only music the monotonous crunch of coal.

Rollers, jigs, wheels and belts united in the great symphony of grinding the coal. It was a dusty and sullen structure filled with teeth for the chewing up of the precious anthracite. Car after car was dumped into its mouth, and into its rollers, coming out at the jigs and shakers into chutes and pans where hunched boys nibbled in stinky water which rushed down the coal, for small pieces of slate. These they threw into rockhoppers. Johnny became one of these hunched figures.

II

"It's not so bad," thought Johnny as he sat over a chute, and learned how to throw out rock instead of coal. He had to be careful about "boney" pieces half rock, half coal, which he threw into a special hopper that led into other rollers. "Boney" was ground up into buckwheat and barley size coal.

He picked "in stove coal." There was nothing hard to it. The water pushed the coal down the chute. Your eyes watched for the gray chip of rock which the fingers would pick out at once and throw into the rock hopper. It became mechanical, so that Johnny's mind could roam over the wide universe—or as much as he knew of it—while his fingers seemed to have eyes and caught each piece of slate without even thinking about it.

Some days were tough. The coal would rush in a steady stream all day. The fingers, rubbing against the sheet iron, developed "red-tops." Their tips burned with pain, and he couldn't hold a piece of slate with them. There was only one cure for red-tops. That was to go behind the jigs and urinate on them. Johnny did this and in a few days the burning sensation vanished. But this was really because Johnny had learned how to pick the rock off the table without rubbing his fingertips against the sheet-iron.

Then bad days shadowed Johnny's youthful experiences. Defective jigs sent out more rock than the pickers could pick out. Though their fingers moved up and down with maddening speed, the chute boss could always grab a handful of coal before it slid into the pocket, and pick out three or four pieces of rock.

He would hold up these gray chips with an air of malicious triumph, and swing his arms at the kids who hunched closer, and worked faster. The boss would often howl with rage, and dance, and wave a stick, and study each boy's movements to spot the defective slate-picker, and threaten to fire the kid who was responsible.

Every kid's breast clogged with fear as he saw himself being thumped by his fathers angry hand for "getting sacked." There

was a heavy scare inside every one of those smeary creatures as they humped to it, and spun out more and more chips of rock in their endless struggle against the coal that filled up the chute faster than they could clear it from the jigs.

The kids always desired to work fast, rush out the coal, and empty the chute. This would give them a few seconds' rest during which they could straighten their backs from their stooped positions. But the struggle was useless. More and more coal poured with heart-breaking persistence to choke up the chute. The boys, struggling to clear the chute, only found it filling up again. They kept on for some time before they gave up.

The wish in every head then was for something to happen inside the breaker. Let the rollers get stuck—or a shaker fall—or an axle break. Then the whistle blew one short toot, every heart bounded with joy as the heavy machinery of the breaker creaked to a stop. The boys would then rush and pick with all that was in them, to clear the chute, to catch a few moments of freedom.

III

Gray days, wet days, bright days, went by. The boys always watched for the two o'clock train pulling out of the station. They knew what time it was as they saw the brisk engine pulling across the bridge, its string of red coaches out of whose windows happy passengers grinned.

Time could be told by the shadows of belts and wheels as they slid upward during the day, and climbed almost to the ceiling by quitting time. But on wet days, one could only tell by watching the train pull out.

There were days when the "Supies" were coming. Everybody seemed to be afraid of "Supies" who were direct ambassadors from the higher offices and always inspected the colliery when they came.

Sweepers always swept better on these days, and chute bosses shovelled away bits of rock that lay around the floor. The breaker-boss ran to and fro in small panics of hurry, and the colliery superintendent himself arrived, looking flustered and astonishingly active, to O. K. things.

Finally the notable guests arrived, usually three or four very lean and worn-down looking men with blunt and superior manners; looked blankly at the slate-pickers who picked faster than ever, and every once in a while dared to steal a sly look at those enormous men who made the bosses themselves gallop around in dread of them.

These eminent men spoke directly into each other's ears, the great noise of the breaker making all normal conversation out of question. The others shook their heads with emphatic dryness. The luminous frowns that grow out of insight into things-behind-things appeared on their lean and brown faces as they nodded their heads and climbed up the steps to see the jigs and shakers.

It seemed that the machinery itself bounded with unusual energy in fear of these huge men. The shakers leapt and fairly danced; the rollers ground melodiously; the jigs bobbed up and down, pumping out great gobs of coal. Every slate-picker wanted more and more coal to rush down, to prove that they were doing an essential task, and couldn't be spared by the company. For rumors had it that these men were great on "laying guys off."

IV

Slate-picking makes dreamers of boys and old men. Boys with life before them, golden years to come, laden with precious adventures. Old men with lives behind them, worn out with the mines, and asthma now catching at their lungs, their throats too husky to sing more songs.

The terrific noise of the breaker becomes faint accompaniment to the shadowy play of hopes inside the young breast. The magic of faroff lands; the warmth of fair women; the blossoms of miraculous springs, and their overpowering perfumes. Then the dream of oneself. Each day one triumphs in council halls, and chambers

of state. Before imaginary audiences one towers as a tremendous speaker whose liberating words bring down stormy applause.

Each hunched creature whose back grows camel-shaped has his dream secure inside his head. Each day he plays with it. His eyes grope through the fine dust that clogs his nostrils and fills his lungs, into fairer lands. He stumbles each day into the pot of gold as he dreams on. Life is something out there, beyond the dust and grind of rollers and swing of shakers performing their daily shimmy.

Day after day the dream comes. There is something intoxicating about the dream-drunk of a breaker. The breaker itself churns and pounds on like an enormous drunken monster, in its grand debauch of coal-production. The floors, pillars, stairs, creak and shake unsteadily. The whole structure seems ready to collapse, but the machinery squeals and howls furiously on.

Drunken with noise and choked with dust these hunched figures sit, overwhelmed, in a crushed silence. The noise becomes a music. It has its harsh moods and sometimes it whispers with a sad softness. One understands the changing tempers of the shaker, the rollers, the scraper line. The breaker becomes a living thing, dreaming its own mad dream, even as its human contents dream.

V

On the tip the old men pick in "broken." "Broken" is the name for a large size of lump coal too heavy for mere boys to handle. The coal and rock comes to them on conveyors instead of in chutes. These old men dream their dreams also.

The years they spent in mines seem now like a distant flickering of naked lamps in drafty mine-gangways. They seem to have crawled out of long and low and thickly-dark tunnels only to find themselves perched along this endless conveyor to wrestle with the great lumps of rock that come to them from the dumped mine-cars.

They have their dream—a lingering regret of dim gold, shadowed by the smoke of the passing years, fading now as the rushing days bring them closer to the remorseless pit where eternity shall brood upon them.

Nicked, and carved up with fallen rocks, and fingers missing, and a few with only one leg, and most of them with canes, these are the cripples of the mines, finishing their last shift. Survivors of the gassy breasts and falling tunnels and creaking manways

of the underground. Not one is healthy or sound after his years of mine-life.

But like the surrounding hills, these men are the cracked and caved-in, and ruined stumps of what they once were, gradually "falling in."

When the machinery groans to a pause at lunch-time, these old men sit about, munching the contents of their cans. They do not talk. Yet when their sad, dim eyes meet, they must understand everything. . . . It is not necessary to talk, after one has lived and struggled and found oneself perched on a conveyor, throwing off lumps of sulphur and gray rock.

But when the breaker starts up, they set to work with a wild energy, and hum threads of forgotten songs, and their eyes travel far beyond the sheet-iron walls of the vibrating breaker to steal peeps at the things they might have had, had life been different, and labor had its honest reward.

But as it is—there is the dream, and the quittin' whistle, and the drink at the end of the shift.

And as Johnny sees these old men humped and exhausted, he wonders dimly if it is himself he sees through the long tunnel of the coming years. He whispers—"It cannot be! It cannot be! I'd rather be dumped by a rock!"

But the breaker pounds on, hammering its own rhythm into the lives perched along its chutes and conveyors. It has its own madness and its own song. It becomes a fate embracing the lives of its victims. And as they dream on their dreams of beautiful futility, the breaker laughs and roars and dances, and belches its chant of production eternal. . . . For it knows that it has triumphed and its song is a song of utter joy!

NIGHT IN NEW YORK

*the city is a chaos;
Confusion of stone and steel,
the spawn of anarchic capitalism.*

*it is night;
the clock in the square points the hour:
nine.*

*pornographic offerings,
eruptions on the skin of streets
from the tainted blood of commerce,
are electricly alight and lewd.*

*signs flash bargain messages.
with twinkling of legs, a slim whore passes,
turns a corner, disappears.
several remarkably interesting ideas
walk up and down the streets . . .
and the trolleys clatter.
taxis slide softly.
the blare of evening hurried movements
welcomes me, a friend, a customer.*

*whaddeyeread?—
telegram! journal! mail!
newspapers; blazoning forth with each edition,
news of the most momentous import;
their blatancy a sterile farce
in the subtle night.
the "el" trains rumble,
with a menacing undertone of hate.*

*and the city laughs rattlingly.
trolleys . . . clatter, back and forth.
taxis slide softly.
slick, suave limousines sneer, tooting horns.
a cop blows his shrill whistle . . .*

*all day in the shop and my back hurts,
my feet are like lead.
my stomach grumbles . . .
i belch.*

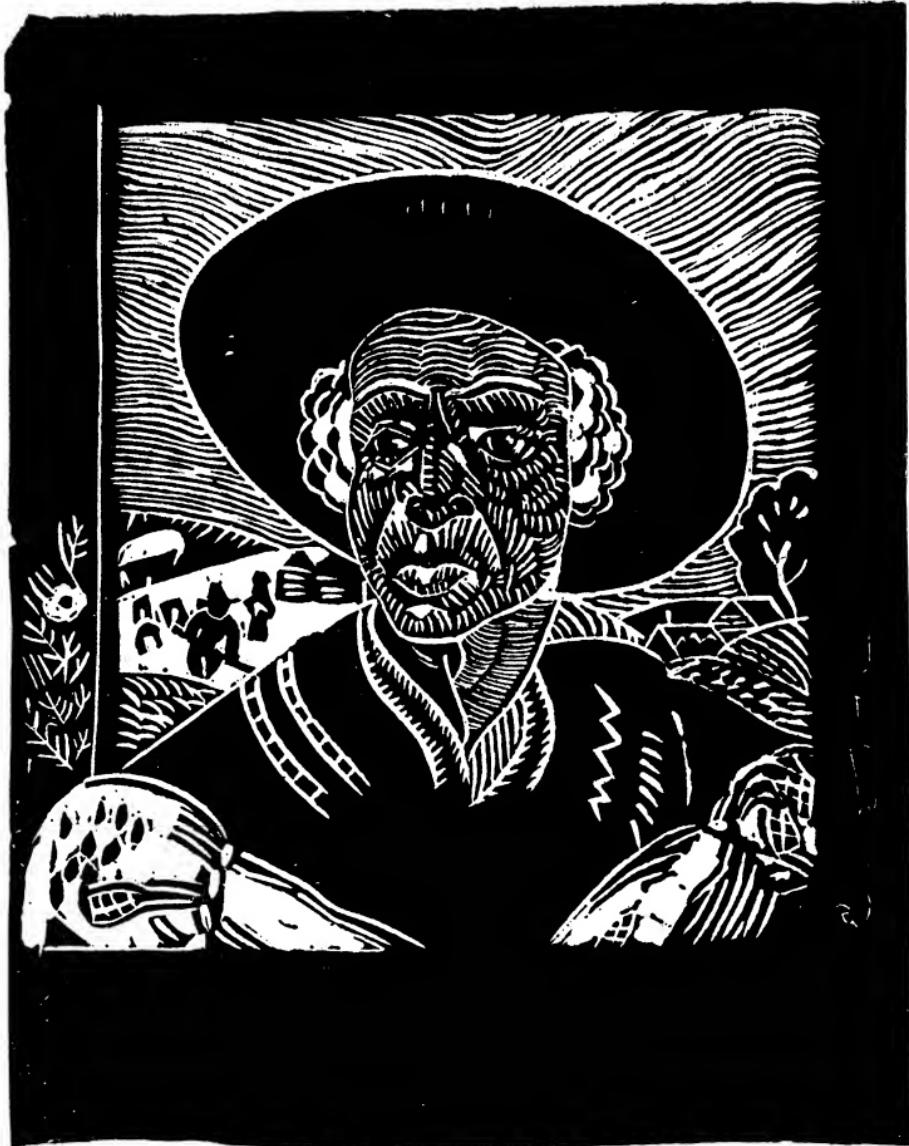
*the city is a chaos;
confusion of stone and steel,
the spawn of anarchic capitalism.*

HERMAN SPECTOR.



Linoleum cut by J. L. Wells.

Cottonfield



Linoleum cut by J. L. Wells.

Cottonfield

(THE RIGHT TO DEATH)

By MIRIAM ALLEN DEFORD

MY FRIEND was dying. For seven months I had taken her daily to a chamber of horrors where her fatal wound was probed, where useless serum was shot into her, where she wept and argued and refused another operation. At three or four o'clock in the morning she would call me up. I would stumble out of bed, in my suburban home across the bay, and listen half asleep to the telephone.

"I can't stand it. I can't lie down, I can't sit, I can't stand up, I can't walk. What shall I do?"

"How can I help you?" I would cry in despair. "Why don't you call your doctor?"

A moan would answer me.

She was living on four grains of morphine a day. In between she sniffed chloroform, enough to drown the pain. She would sob:

"I have clothes laid away in the second drawer of the bureau. Dress me in them and have me cremated."

As patiently as a detective I tried to get from her her mother's maiden name, the place of her birth—the things the death notice and the certificate would require.

It is no fun to watch anybody die.

One day she said to me:

"Will you kill me? There is plenty of chloroform. I tried, but I only burnt my face, and I couldn't go on with it. Please kill me. I'll lie quietly and let you put the sponge over my mouth and nose."

I thought of the apartment house janitor who would testify that I had been the last to call on her, and how afterwards they had found her dead. I thought that after all she was not very dear to me; she was only the teacher in my aunt's school whom I had known since I was a child. I could not do it.

Three months later I shipped her back to her brother in Cincinnati, and a month later she died, in atrocious agony.

If I had loved her I could have done it, as the woman in Paris poisoned her lover who was dying of an incurable disease. Why is it that one cannot kill the person one does not either hate or love?

The bootlegger told me two stories. One was of a man I had known. He used to hang around the speakeasy. We called him Slim. Once he cooked us a dinner, a southern dinner of Virginia ham and corn bread. He was slowly dying of cancer of the stomach.

"Slim wanted me to kill him," the bootlegger said. "One night when I asked him to have a drink he said no, he couldn't stand it. Then he was quiet for a while, and all of a sudden he said:

"Is that stuff of yours poison?"

"Not that I know of," I told him. "I've drunk a lot of it, and I'm not dead yet."

"If it was poison," Slim said, "I'd drink it until I couldn't hold any more, and then I'd go upstairs and die."

"Slim," I told him, "If it was poison I'd stake you to a gallon, and I'd feed it to you till you dropped."

"You've got a gun," Slim said. "Will you shoot me?"

"But I couldn't do it. We passed it off for a joke."

Slim drifted away into a hospital, and after a while he died there.

The bootlegger is an old railroad man. The war lost him his job, and when he came home from saving the world for democracy, he opened a bootleg joint.

"Once," he told me, "I was brakeman on a road between Washington and North Dakota. There was a little town in Montana called Horton. It was nothing but a row of shacks in the mud aside of the railroad tracks, and every shack was a saloon or a gambling joint or a 'house.' 'Rails' weren't welcome there; they'd run us out of the town more than once."

"We stopped there one night to take on water. The tank leaked and there were lots of high weeds growing under it. While we were waiting we saw two men come down and throw something in the weeds.

"I had a young fellow working with me, a young hick from Missouri. We went over and looked, and what they had thrown there was a man. He was bent double, holding on to his belly."

"We turned the lantern on him, and he looked up at us. He was bleeding on the weeds—not much, just a trickle."

"He said, 'I'm going to die. Will one of you fellows kill me?'

"What happened?" I asked him.

"I was playing and I was three hundred dollars to the good. They got mad and they shot me."

"He lifted up his shirt above his pants and there seven holes in his stomach.

"I know one of you's got a gun," he said. "Won't you kill me?"

"We put him in a flat car and we carried him to the next town. The nearest doctor was a hundred and fifty miles away. The Missouri boy and I talked it over. I had a gun all right—had it in my pocket. The fellow kept moaning. I went up and talked to him again.

"Where are you from?" I asked him.

"New York state," he answered. But he wouldn't tell us the town, or what his name was.

"We stopped again to water—we had to stop every half hour in those days, with the small tanks we had. The Missouri hick and I took him out and laid him on the grass. Then we went aside and talked it over. The boy from Missouri wanted to kill him. He had a pickaxe, and he said he would hit the guy in the head with the handle and put him out of his misery. I could have shot him easy. I knew if we didn't, he would live four or five hours and then die."

"We can't do it," I said. "Those guys in Horton are after us rails anyway. If they found this fellow with a bullet through his head they'd say we did the whole thing, and maybe get us for it. We don't dare."

"The fellow was wriggling around there on the grass and moaning. 'I'll give you a hundred dollars to kill me,' he said. He took the money out of his pocket and held it out to us."

"I don't want your money," the Missouri hick told him. "I'll do it just to help you."

"He started toward him with the pickaxe, but I pulled him on board and the train started."

"Two days later we came by that way again. Somebody was just burying the fellow. He must have lived several hours."

That was the bootlegger's second story, and I thought of my friend. Why can't we kill anybody we neither love nor hate?

Twice in the past few years fathers have killed children who were, in one case imbecilic, in the other hopelessly crippled. They were both acquitted.

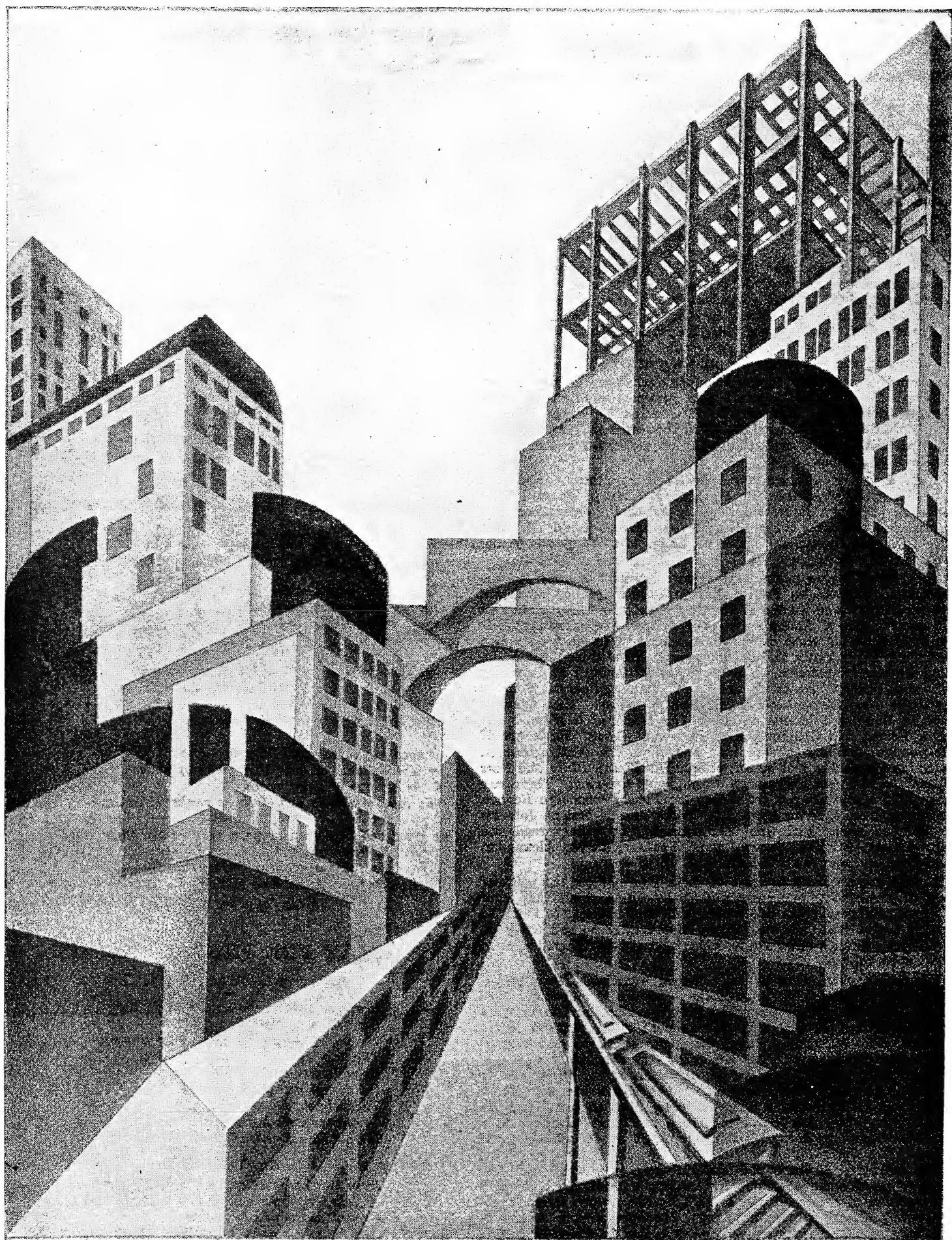
But that is a common duty we human beings owe each other. Doctors always deny that they give overdoses of narcotics to patients who are going to die anyway. But unless they are monsters they must do so sometimes. An old woman I knew was dying of a tumor. She was over eighty, and it was useless to operate. She was in dreadful pain. The doctor simply kept her under morphine until she slept herself out of life. Yet a dozen years ago when a physician in Chicago was called upon to deliver a baby born without a posterior opening for its alimentary canal—a freak doomed to a miserable death—and he refused to operate, but simply let it die, he was tried for murder. Why? Why does anyone allow the idiots and monstrosities to live? Why are there two pairs of twins, at least, alive in America today, joined by their spinal columns, unable to separate, destined to abnormal lives, to wretchedness camouflaged with publicity? Why are we so afraid of death, kindest of solutions to unanswerable problems?

There should be trained anaesthetists, called in when a child is born who cannot possibly live a normal existence, when a human being is so afflicted that a painful death is inevitable. Then the wise and kindly anesthetist should bring out his means of relief, and end this misery at once. But we make a fetish of mere living, however horrible and ignoble, and we condemn people to a life worse, far worse than death.

When my friend went back to Cincinnati there was a campaign on against dope addicts. Her brother, shocked by her allowance of four grains of morphine a day, reported her to the police. She was taken in her stretcher to jail and thrown into a cell. The next day the judge dismissed the case, and she was taken back to her brother's house to die.

But as she lay in the cell, hearing the shrieks of addicts "kicking it off," tortured by her disease, in agony of body and soul, I wonder if she thought bitterly of me, and of my refusal to end her pain quickly and without a pang.

I am sorry the theological taboos of civilized society forbade me to perform that act of human decency and kindness.



The City of Tomorrow

Drawn by Louis Lozowick



The City of Tomorrow

Drawn by Louis Lozowick

AWAKE NEGRO POETS!

By WILLIAM C. PATTERSON

There was a distinct social taboo in this country for some years that prohibited crediting a Negro with a work of art. Artistic creation by a black man was regarded merely as an indication of a white strain in him. If this taboo is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, it is the race-consciousness of Negro poets, and their determination to be regarded as black men that is the motivating cause.

Of course there was some sort of background to the old white man explanation of Negro culture. Doctor Herskovits, one of our most eminent anthropologists, in a recent exhaustive study of the American Negro, declared that probably less than one-fourth of the American Negroes are without some admixture of white blood. All of them in the "pure-black" class live in what is known as the Black Belt of the South. From the other three-fourths, from what has been called their cultured elite, their talented tenth, comes the voice of colored America. So powerful is this expression that it has arrested and is holding the attention of the civilized world.

Obviously, it is easy to say that the fact that the new Negro culture is the creation of a white-black group proves that the white blood is dominant. Not at all. The scientific explanation is simply that the pure-blacks, living in the South, are so oppressed, so debased by white exploiters, that any cultural expression is impossible for them.

The Negro poets of the North understand the situation, and have persistently called themselves black men, have proclaimed their songs Negro songs, have triumphantly hailed the emergence of a Negro culture. The lies of Nordic Southerners could not keep pace with this furious insistence on racial identity by the young Negro intellectuals.

The rise of Negro poetry was slow. Phyllis Wheatley led the procession, followed by Paul Laurence Dunbar (called the black Robert Burns) and James Weldon Johnson who today stands in the front ranks of American literary artists, and whose prose is as eloquent as his verse is melodious. From Johnson we have in book form *Fifty Years and Other Poems*. Later came Claude McKay, the black Jamaican, whose songs so often struck an inspiring note of militancy. He is the author of *Jamaica, Constab Ballads*, *Spring in New Hampshire*, and *Harlem Shadows*. Then there is Georgia Douglas Johnson with her *The Heart of a Woman and Other Poems*, and Countee Cullen, author of *Color*. He is one of the younger but one of the best known of the contemporaries. Langston Hughes cannot be forgotten. His *Weary Blues* and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* are known throughout America. There are many others who are not yet widely heralded: Gwendolyn Bennett, Angelina Grimke, Arna Bontemps, Frank Horne, Helene Johnson (a talented young girl who will some day be widely read and appreciated), Stirling Brown, Anne Spenser, Lewis Alexander, Mae Cowdery, and Walter Hawkins.

If we were critically to treat of their efforts from the point of view of poetic technique, we would be forced to admit that some of these youngest poets are amateurish and crude. It is to be expected of a race just emerging. But this is not an essay on technique. A much more serious charge must be preferred against our Negro intellectuals.

The *Crisis*, mouthpiece of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the *Opportunity* magazine, voice of the Urban League, by promoting poetry contests are doing much to stimulate and encourage the development of the younger Negro writers. This stimulation takes the form of endless publicity as well as the usual prizes. The result is that young writers become desperately anxious to capture the attention of the public and to gain a foothold for themselves among the Negro literati. These young writers then sing a tune likely to beget success. Artistic integrity is submerged in the mad race for fame. Perhaps it is futile to expect anything else, but some of us do. We demand more.

The influence of fame and material success is evident in the work even of some of the older writers. Yesterday Langston Hughes sang of revolt. Poems like *Rising Waters* and *Park Bench* were proletarian marching songs. Today that note is lamentably missing. The best work of McKay is that in which he strikes a militant chord. It is then he gives us the sense of a man fearless and free, who dares to fight the exploitation and degradation of his people. He speaks not as a racialist but as the champion of op-

pressed peoples. It is propaganda, yes, but the music is there, greater music perhaps than it would be without the proletarian feeling. His poetry grapples with the realities and remains poetry. But what is Claude McKay doing today?

Naturally, our poets are following the lead of their white brothers. Where all worship the dollar, it is difficult for a few to remain above the popular current. But that is no consolation. If white artists are prostituting themselves, Negro artists cannot be excused simply on the ground that they are doing what everyone else is doing.

There is little in recent Negro poetry that would lead one to believe that the poets are conscious of the existence of the Negro masses. There is no challenge in their poetry, no revolt. They do not echo the lamentations of the downtrodden masses. Millions of blacks are suffering from poverty and cruelty, and black poets shut their eyes! There is no race more desperate in this country than the black race, and Negro poets play with pale emotions!

We can be frank. Our Negro poets voice the aspirations of a rising petty bourgeoisie. Occasionally they express the viciousness of black decadents. And that is all. They are sensationalists, flirting with popularity and huge royalties. They are cowards. Instead of leading heroically in the march of the world's workers, they are whimpering in the parlors of white and black idlers and decadents.

I must also say something about the kind of criticism they have been getting. It has all been mawkish and sentimental. When not sentimental, it has been condescending. Back-slapping. Silly flattery. Anything but criticism. Let us sound the bugle-call for militancy. Let us have strong vital criticism, Marxian criticism. Let us have the poetry of the masses. Let us have an international poetry.

STRIKE MEETING

(From The French of Augustin Habaru)

Thousands of bodies within these walls,
billows of motionless foreheads,
phosphorescence of eyes
and silence!

They have come from their lodgings, from their factories
with the step they have and no one else has,
with their dirty garments starched with sweat,
with their own pain in their hearts.

You speak to them—and little by little
your words float out over that ocean of heads
and the cement of your words
builds one solid body out of those ranks of bodies.

One great solid body under your gesture and your voice,
one great volcano under the crust of flesh,
and you, the creator, you are buried and forgotten
in the hymn of triumph which will one day burst those walls asunder.

Translated by ROY TEMPLE HOUSE.

MEAT FOR PROPAGANDISTS

Arlington Cemetery, Wash., D. C.

Here's the most hallowed spot in America;
Here they slowly inter,
With bugle-taps and boom of big guns,
The top-heroes of top-capitalism,
Republicans and Democrats.
Into these granite vaults
That cheat the worms
Go the nation's honored servants,
With bugle-taps and boom of big guns.

Any Pottersfield

Here lie the detested improvident,
Rudeley, without ceremony,
Shoved away in pine boxes—
Socialists, Communists, Reds of all kinds,
And persons of no politics . . .
Meat for the worms.

H. H. LEWIS.

A YOUNG SOVIET WRITER

By NADJA PAVLOV

I. Babel is one of the young writers brought to the fore by the Russian Revolution who, with lightning-like rapidity, have won for themselves not only popularity but even literary fame both in Russia and abroad. Babel's best known work is a volume of short stories about Budionny's cavalry regiment during the civil wars. Since then he has published little that is new, excepting some fragmentary reminiscences from his childhood and a colorless play called *Sunset*. Despite the meagre output, he still is regarded as one of the outstanding contemporary Russian writers, and readers, as well as critics, look forward to his work.

By the very nature of his art, Babel cannot be very prolific. His creative parsimony is partly the result of stylistic precosity. He polishes every word in his few but formally flawless creations. His stories, short, often half-page miniatures, startle one by their verbal compactness as well as by their extravagant and luxurious imagery, instinct with a unique, eastern semi-exotic pathos.

Most of the young writers of Revolutionary Russia produce works devoid of stylistic embellishment. Against this background Babel's literary form sparkles and intoxicates with its rich, daring, and strange romanticism. This romanticism is the basic feature of Babel's art. It has elicited strikingly contradictory opinions from readers. Some of them, including Budionny himself, accuse the author of maligning the First Cavalry Regiment of the Red Army. A larger number of readers, maintain that he has caught the spirit and military pathos of the regiment, but that he has overlooked its specific revolutionary character. The most favorable critics of his stories have been Babel's heroes, real people, copied from nature, who have survived the gruesome civil war years. These have showered the author with letters of praise and exaltation.

Babel's wholly unique hypertrophied naturalism, in places informed with a suggestion of sadism, tends to mislead readers who, because of this naturalism, often forget the real author, the dreamer and romantic, and demand from him naturalistic reporting or chronological records.

Babel was a literary worker with that section of the Russian cossack army which was placed under the revolutionary banner of the First Cavalry Regiment, and which was most renowned for its ancient stern military traditions, and its half-legendary victories during the civil war. He went through most of its military campaigns, and saw them from an angle peculiarly his own. He saw them as a grotesque conglomeration of savage war-time abandon, imperturbable cruelty, extraordinary daring, and a vastly exhilarating revolutionary enthusiasm and pathos. Babel's heroes speak a language most colorful and original, a language so specific, so strangely interwoven of peasant speech and of a fresh, revolutionary oratorical vernacular, vibrant and florid pathos, that unfortunately no translation can give the reader the faintest idea of the author's art.

The stories of the Cavalry Regiment include episodes from the civil war recorded by the author; dialogues, of course—stylized; reminiscences of those who had taken part in the war; pictures of places and peoples ravaged by the war; a new, revolutionized psychology.

We see a motley crowd pass before our eyes: the Regiment's dare-devil fighters, professionals, politicians, and philosophers; revolutionists inspired by an ideal; avengers; Jewish dreamers from the little ruined towns of Poland—all the people that have been stirred by the revolution, and have come to know it through the smoke, and powder, and blood, through the unspeakable tension of war.

All of which, though described with a striking naturalism, is at the same time charged with deep romantic feeling, with dreams and memories, at times hidden, at times colorfully expressed, in striking contrast to the horribly oppressive yet also poetized reality. It is this romantic-naturalistic combination, this stirring contrast that is the powerful and original feature of Babel's art. Some of his stories are almost prose-poems, for example, his famous sketch *Gedali*. This is precise and compact; it places a halo of poetry around the memorable figure of Gedali, the Jewish antiquarian who is painfully seeking roads that may lead him to the "sweet revolution" and the unrealizable international. The

opening sentences of this sketch are the quintessence of the author's literary manner:

"On Sabbath eve I am oppressed by the deep sorrow of recollection. On these evenings, long ago, my grandfather used to caress with his reddish beard the tomes of Ibn-Ezra. My mother, in a lace collar, would hover with her gnarled fingers over the Sabbath candles and weep exquisitely. My child's heart would tremble on those evenings, like a little ship upon magic waves. O withered Talmud of my childhood. O deep anguish of my memory. . . ."

Were all of Babel's stories, or rather were each of Babel's stories, completely under the sway of this "unfulfilled dream," this "intoxication of a dream," it would indeed be difficult to feel in them the specific character of the revolutionary army; as a matter of fact, this nostalgia adds to the cumulative artistic effect, for it offers a moving and emphatic contrast to the psychological reactions of the lower social strata thrown to the surface by the revolution, and with uncanny artistic intuition caught and reflected by this writer. Still all this does not yet constitute that social-psychological synthesis which we have a right to expect from a great writer.

Will Babel give us this synthesis? . . .

The stories he had written before the revolution, those dealing with the Odessa underworld, though exceedingly interesting and original are, like his stories on the First Cavalry Regiment, extremely sketchy, and in theme, of course, less significant than the latter.

Have not the Cavalry Stories been written as a part of the general elation and spiritual strain of the early years of the revolution? And does not the author's prolonged silence indicate a decline in his creative power, a decline in a power nourished on grandiose events and changes that had been experienced by the author incoherently, and reflected by this through the lense of subjective mood?

Babel's literary skill, one thinks, is an assurance that he will find also in contemporary reality congenial images, and that, enriched by the experiences of the last years, he will again create works of art as excellent as the Cavalry Stories.



Woodcut by Justino Fernandez

Mexican Trinity



Woodcut by Justino Fernandez

Mexican Trinity



The Sidewalks of New York

ARE MUSICIANS WORKERS?—By VALENTINE KONIN

MUSIC, from a technical point of view, is isolated from the other arts. It lacks all concrete imagery (the work of Arthur Honegger being the exception). It seeks to display itself through indefinite and unlimited emotion. For this reason many who would admit themselves incompetent to enter the field of literature or painting, choose music as their profession. No doubt, in every field of art we find a few who cannot offer valuable contributions to their specialty; but only among musicians do we find such a great number of cripples—useless to the world in general and useless to their art. It is not only the fallacy of "emotionalism" that is responsible for such a situation. It is also the inevitable outcome of our musical training.

To illustrate: a certain conservatory in New York where I study is considered among the most important musical institutions of the country. It was the first establishment of its kind in the United States and was modeled directly after the European conservatories. More than half of its instructors speak with pronounced foreign dialects (acquired or otherwise). Students from everywhere flock here. We find New Yorkers, Canadians, and Southerners; young girls from the Middle West who have discovered they possess vocal chords; earnest boys who speak gravely about wrist staccatos and octave studies; fiddlers who do nothing but fiddle. We meet vague long-haired boys who work hours on cadence chords, dreaming of the time when they will sit in a box and listen to the Philharmonic performing their tone-poems.

These pupils rush enthusiastically from one concert to another. In a month they acquire scores of autographs of prominent concertists. They are indifferent to everything not pertaining to music. They are satisfied to drudge over glissando passages six hours a day. They receive all their mental food from Kreutzer or Kramer. In their spare time they make money by teaching on the sly, thus producing hundreds of other musical invalids.

Among musicians there still remains an idiotic tradition that art is something removed from the ugly struggle for daily bread. Our conservatory directors would sooner forgive the students' racial or religious "errors" than any mention of financial difficulties. They object most strenuously to students earning their own money. This is called "commercializing your art."

Our school makes no effort to prepare its students for some definite work. The majority of these students are lost! They don't know where they are drifting and are afraid to find out! At first they dream of glory and fame on the concert stage; but when they realize that for most of them these dreams are mirages, they also discover with horror that they are unable to take any useful place in the society. The school does not require its students to study in the direction to which their abilities tend. That would be "commercialism." What is required of students is enough musical ability to enter the conservatory, regular payment of tuition

fees and enough parrot persistence to survive the routine.

As a result, hundreds of potential teachers, theorists, or composers are lost because they can not successfully perform Lizst's Etudes or hear the absolute intervals. Those that stay often play the part of a square peg in a round hole. Their general musical education gives them no opportunity to find their individual inclinations. They continue studying for the rest of their lives and end as third rate music teachers, or performers in the neighborhood movie houses.

When Scott Nearing's lecture on "Education in Soviet Russia" was announced, I was consumed with curiosity to find out whether the Bolsheviks had solved my problem. Unfortunately, the vast topic of general education made it impossible for the lecturer to speak in any detail about the musical field. I learned, however, that after all there is a way of introducing reforms into even the European conservatories.

I hunted up the address of one of my old acquaintances living in Moscow and wrote her a lengthy questionnaire. Russians may be willing to work hard for their country, but when it comes to letter-writing, they fail to conceal their true nature. A Russian would sooner part with his samovar than answer a letter the day he receives it. After a long wait, I received an answer to my letter with a little article from the *Pravda*, written by a certain Eugene Brande. The following translation is mine, so the original author is not responsible for its awkwardness:

"Previous to 1917, the main task of the Moscow Conservatory was to shoot forth into the world an army of virtuoso-concertists. The other functions of the institution were therefore obscure. With the establishment of Soviet Rule the conservatory has undergone a complete change. The school is at present divided into three chief departments: teaching, composing, and performing. All students are required to specialize in one of these fields; within each one of these departments there are further specializations.

"The theoretical work is done in connection with practical work. This means that in addition to regular class work where the students receive instruction, they also do apprentice work in their respective branches. Such practice enables a student, upon the completion of his course, to start his work at once as a fully equipped musician in his particular field."

But this sounds like an industrial rather than an art school, doesn't it?



Louis Ribak

The Sidewalks of New York

ARE MUSICIANS WORKERS?—By VALENTINE KONIN

MUSIC, from a technical point of view, is isolated from the other arts. It lacks all concrete imagery (the work of Arthur Honegger being the exception). It seeks to display itself through indefinite and unlimited emotion. For this reason many who would admit themselves incompetent to enter the field of literature or painting, choose music as their profession. No doubt, in every field of art we find a few who cannot offer valuable contributions to their field.

The CONFESSIONS OF A "CONFESSION" EDITOR

By
MARGARET LARKIN

The girl who was leaving "broke me in" to the job in something less than a half hour. She had been sub-editor on the "confession" magazine for three years, and was now leaving to live by freelancing. She had gotten a contract to write at least two "confessions" a month from another magazine, so that would keep her going. Besides, her husband had left the other girl for whom he had left her, and was begging to be reinstated. But she was "through," and she felt that she could resist his demands better if she lived in the country.

Sandwiched in between these facts I obtained information on how the magazine spelled theater, technic, and balloon; how many lines constituted a column, and how to illustrate the stories. This last was very complicated. Each "confession" required two illustrations, and these had to be chosen from a collection of some four or five thousand old illustrations which were kept on file somewhere. Proofs of them were all pasted up in five big books, and the thing was to find two illustrations that fitted your story and reserve them by telephone. They both had to be by the same artist — this insured the blonde heroine and the brunette villain (with a mustache) looking alike in both illustrations. The girl who was breaking me in warned me that the greatest difficulty was to keep the sub-editors on the three other magazines in the string, from erasing your "reserved" sign and claiming the illustration for their books.

Oh, yes, and one other thing I had to do was to be Letty Lee.

"Don't answer any that are married," the retiring Letty Lee advised. "The girls who read this magazine are all young, and they don't like to read about married people's troubles. And of course, cut out any stuff in their letters that looks too snappy. It's a good thing to print one answer in each issue, and say 'XYZ—Of course I can't print your letter, but can only say that you have made a terrible and heartbreaking mistake' or something like that, and say you'll answer in a private letter if she'll send her name and address. Of course you don't have to answer with personal letters unless you want to."

I enquired if she had ever answered with personal letters.

"Yes, I used to when I first came. You get kind of excited about them, you know. But it doesn't do any good, and I got enough of it during office hours, so I quit," she replied.

During the first weeks I took my job very seriously, for I was learning to edit. The cheap, sloshy stories that went into the magazine were carefully and uniformly edited and made up. The owner of the "string" raised as much hell over a typographical error as a Conde Nast.

Then I began to find it all very funny. Everybody on the editorial staff was young and jazzy and crazy. Most of them lived a "free" life in the Village. They were nearly all from the West, and had grabbed any job in order to get going in New York. They all worked hard, but they all stopped for cigarettes and 'cokes' and an occasional story.

The editors-in-chief were serious about getting the magazine out on time, avoiding the inevitable blunders of a cheap printer, and keeping on the newsstands. An editor who had an issue "jerked" by order of the Police Commissioner, was due to lose his job.

Pretty soon I was good enough to be entrusted with the ticklish job of re-writing stories that had good stuff in them but were a little strong; or stories that had a good idea but were not strong enough. No "normal" erotic idea was taboo, but hundreds of words and phrases were forbidden. You couldn't say that she surrendered; you had to say "lost in the ecstasy of his kisses, scarcely knowing what she did, Irene drank deep." You couldn't say she was pregnant; you had to say "She knew that the greatest blessing of womanhood was to be hers," as the case might be. You couldn't say "He saw the soft flesh of her neck and breast"; it must be edited to say "He realized the full glory of her womanhood."

Rewriting blunt phrases into suggestive ones (at which I was very clever) and being Letty Lee were what made the job seem

less amusing. The letters that came to Letty Lee were real ones, from girls and boys in factory towns and country towns all over America. They always began "I've read your magazine for two years." In the silly phrases that we wrote into the stories, they confided the troubles that they "would never dare let anybody know," and in complete faith, asked us what to do about life. They were the same troubles that all the boys and girls of the modern world are facing; and they were trying to solve them in much the same ways as the sub-editors who lived in Greenwich Village. What they really wanted to be told was "Little girl, you're not the only one. We all get into jams and fall in and out of love. Keep a stiff upper lip and do whatever seems good to you." All the sub-editors from little mid-western towns had felt the same isolation and confusion in their rebellion. The situation that the "hicks" wrote to Letty Lee about were our own stories, in many cases. So we advised them, in fancy phrases, and with a great show of liberality, to conform to the social standards that they had revolted against already.

"Dear Letty Lee: I have been reading your advice for over a year, but so far have never read of any girl having the same trouble that I have. When I was fifteen I met Henry. At eighteen Mother wanted me to marry him; said there was no one like him. I brought you up from a baby. Is this the thanks I get? She would cry — that hurt me terrible. I told him I did not love him, and he said he would see that I would never marry anyone else and he did. Oh the horror of it. Then I met Ed, the only one in the world that I know I loved. He wanted to marry me, but I thought of how Mother cried. I'm now married to Henry. My heart is broke. I know you'll say forget Ed. Oh please don't because I cannot. I am the mother of his child—his son. Henry does not know and never shall. Am so glad it's Ed's child. I want to be free, is that no more than right? I want the child. Ed says he will marry me. Could Henry take the baby from me? I'm decent now, take good care of him and my home. He is a nursing baby seven months old. I know you are reading with care and will answer with kindness. A young Mother."

We had no solution to offer, for the magazine could not sanction infidelity, and only advised divorce to the party who had been wronged—never to a woman who had wronged her husband. Besides, she was married, and we didn't answer married people's problems.

"Dear Letty Lee: I am a girl of sixteen. I go around with a boy of twenty-one, he is wonderful. My first kiss was from this boy. This was in July. In August many things happened, among which, lost in the ecstasy of his kisses I consented to do certain things. Well, everything turned out all right that time, but a very narrow escape. Now I see him nearly three times a week. Just lately I again surrendered to his caresses, and again the same thing happened. Now I don't know what to do. I don't know how to find out if I'm to have a baby or not. How should I find out? What should I do? This is not puppy love as far as I'm concerned. Please answer as soon as possible. Anxious."

This was one which could be answered "Of course I cannot print your letter" with all of Mother's admonitions on a girl's self respect, though less bitterly pronounced.

There were letters from the fat girls who couldn't get a beau; letters from fifteen-year old girls whose mothers still spanked them; letters from girls whose sweethearts no longer mentioned marriage, though they had once sworn it was just the same; letters from boys who didn't think they should meet their girls in secret; letters from middle-aged women who had taken lovers and lived "just the same as married"—all asking "What shall I do?" and all offering the same justification, "I love him so much."

We replied with "confessions" in which girls and boys danced in evening clothes and got "lost in the ecstasy of kisses." Letty Lee replied that no man who really loves a woman ever allows her to lower herself in his esteem by "doing certain things." And the factory boys and girls paid twenty-five cents to read both, and doubtless took both messages to heart.

SOLDIER OF CHRIST

(Notes for a War Novel)

By CHARLES YALE HARRISON

I

He was a Methodist lay preacher; when the circuit minister couldn't make the rounds he acted as the man of God. He came from somewhere in the backblocks of northern Ontario. A thin, nervous little fellow of forty or so, slightly bald in front and a pimply face. We first became aware of him in the Peel Street barracks in Montreal where he enlisted. Anderson was his name.

It was after midnight on pay-day. The boys were beginning to dribble in after a night's carousal "down the line." Most of them smelled of booze and women. A few jaundiced electric lights burned here and there in the barn-like bunk room. Anderson in his heavy regulation gray woolen underwear sagging at the seat, stood at the edge of his bunk.

He waited cautiously for a lull in the rowdy, drunken conversation and then: "Some of you men'd put your bodies where I wouldn't put my swagger stick." His voice sounded like an insistent piccolo above braying trombones.

Cries and hoarse shouts came from the yellow-black recesses of the room:

"Shut up."

"It's good for pimples."

"Pipe down, sky pilot."

The shouting died away and Anderson continued in his squeaky voice: "Well, anyway, God didn't make your bodies for that." The last word with fervor.

II

He was a great favorite, of course, with the Y. M. C. A., secretary and some of the officers; the men detested him.

The night we entrained for Halifax the whole outfit was blind drunk. Anderson alone was sober. The battalion was to march down to the Windsor Station at eight o'clock. At four in the afternoon the evening papers appeared on the streets:

..MONTREAL'S HEROES OFF
FOR HALIFAX TONIGHT

Royal Regiment To Get Rous-
ing Send-off at Eight
tonight.

Men Eager For Fight

It took an hour to line the men up for parade outside the barracks. The boys sprawled drunk on the cots and brawls were the order of the day. Kids of sixteen lay puking over the sides of their bunks.

"Quick march!" The band struck up "Tipperary" and the staggering column started down the street. Under his ninety-pound pack Anderson marched sober and erect. At the corner of Peel and St. Catherine streets thousands of people cheered and waved handkerchiefs. Flowers were tossed into the swaying ranks. Sleek men standing on the steps of the Windsor Hotel threw packages of cigarettes into the twisted column. Drunken, spiked heels crushed roses and Camels. Befurred women laughed and cried in patriotic hysteria. A banner strung across the street read: For King and Country.

Anderson marched by my side. I heard his excited, piping voice above the thunderous farewell. "The finest people . . . see . . . this Christian city . . . sinners . . . drunken . . . the Lord will . . ." The bloodthirsty ovation blotted out his words completely.

On the train the boys were green under the gills. White faced men reeled to the toilets. The floor of the car was slimy and wet.

III

We were very apt at learning the smutty marching songs. Gallows-humor, I think the Germans called it. The boys sang with a terrifying eagerness for the comic.

Mad'mselle from Armentieres, parlay voo
Oh, mad'mselle from Armentieres, parlay voo
Mad'mselle from Armentieres,
Hadn't been ed in forty years,
Hincky dincky parlay voo.

Anderson complained to the chaplain. "Suppose we were bombed

or something. Imagine going to meet your God with a dirty song on your lips." He was frightened. Then men roared their marching songs, shouting and singing down the terror that gripped each heart.

Oh madame have you a daughter fine,
Fit for a soldier up the line —
Hincky dincky parlay voo.

IV

Bethune was a haven for the Canadians. It was fifteen miles behind the Canadian front and could only be reached by naval artillery. Just outside the town stood a coal mine largely owned by German shareholders. This fortunate circumstance kept the German gunners from shelling the town although the surrounding territory was pock-marked with shell holes.

There were showerbaths in the mine buildings and here we bathed our lousy and scratched bodies after three months in the line. But water was scarce even here. Fifteen seconds under the shower then out and soap yourself; fifteen seconds under again for rinsing. Then into clean underwear with lice as large as rice seeds lurking in wait in the seams and crotch. The mortal enemies of the soldier: lice and officers.

Bethune was a haven of rest for trench-weary soldiers. Bethune had a shower bath; it also had an official brothel. Then there were innumerable estaminets, poker joints, crown-and-anchor gambling places and French war widows who made a living by selling huge platters of eggs and chips, six eggs and a mountain of browned potatoes, for five francs. But the official house of "joy" in Bethune was the big attraction.

V

The house had six filles de joie on duty all the time. Three for privates and three for officers. The officers even had a separate entrance. It was said that inside the hostesses did not recognize this distinction of military rank but jumped into a breach as the press of business demanded. When our battalion of seven hundred odd men was paid off, there was a line-up stretching for five blocks from the privates' entrance. The younger soldiers would grumble impatiently but the older men waited stolidly.

When it was still light enough to see, the men in line joked with each other and passersby. "You gotta wait in line for everything in war time." But as night deepened the queue became a long silent line of avid men who stared hungrily as the brightly-lit ever-opening door spewed forth khaki-clad figures which hurried off into the dark.

No one ever know how Anderson solved his sex problems. One day he confided to me that he saw the battalion chaplain sneaking into the officers' entrance. The telling of it gave him a vague sort of satisfaction, I thought.

VI

Passchendaele was a corpse-infested hole. For months heavy



Drawn by Dorothy Owen



DOROTHY
OWEN

Drawn by Dorothy Owen

MIDNIGHT MISSION

By JOSEPH KALAR

Los Angeles is a goofy holy-roller Chicago, and Broadway is its Michigan Boulevard. The same elegantly dressed ladies quiver bulbous breasts and put forward handsome legs in an unconscious sexual symphony; the same fat human stallions, who would be pimps if a reversal came their way, stand on the corners lewdly appraising the possible virgins as they mince by; the same elegant window-displays of exquisite furs, splendid gowns, correct furniture, and beautifully tailored pants. Standing on a corner, leaning against a lamp-post, I discovered Civilization. Civilization is an old weary bawd parading her frilled bloomers and silk stepins in an obscene gesture of pretended youth; she is an old woman, giddy with senility, taking Phy-Lo-Tac to reduce her weight. Broadway is the perfumed gesture of gelded he-men reeking with hair-tonic, it is the street paved with gold upon which the sturdy daughters and sons of bourgeoisie Iowa businessmen and "Kulaks" descended in an avalanche.

Two or three blocks away, Civilization without her pink bloomers and exquisite perfume, in horrible nakedness, sat on her buttocks in the dirt, and sneered. Her bawdy house is the Midnight Mission, and she is her own pimp. Her domain here is a maze of grimy futile buildings, as dirty and lousy and sad as the Main Stem in Chicago, and her Southside.

In the midnight mission a faded carbon-copy of Aimee McPherson exuded a sexual aura, and thrilled the feeble relics gathered there for rest with an image of a shoddy youth and a past glory. She was dressed in blue silk, a subtle affirmation of her assertion that "faith in God alone brings riches." One poor idiotic outcast stealthily appraised her rather fat ankles and matronly breasts, and nervously rubbed thin freckled hands. It appeared that the Lady, who would have been Aimee had not the Lord been so unkind as to visit her with the ravages of Time, had had a personal conversation with the Lord. The eyes of her audience gleamed; thin lips worked convulsively; pale tongues moistened dry lips.

Back of me three men slept. For the painful price of being saved, these men are allowed to sleep sitting up on the benches. To the side of me several men simulated attention while reading the wantads in the Los Angeles Examiner.

One man was an exact copy of Bismarck. The same bulldog visage, bristling white mustaches, and beetling eye-brows. In an earlier day he would have been a Jim Hill and a brutal pacemaker.

Another, capturing perfectly the senile imbecilic lines of face of the father of the man of Ludlow and Columbine fame, worked his lips continually over a toothless mouth, and nodded his head in silent agreement.

To one side, giving forth the sound of typewriters clacking, is the office. It is here that Brother Tom and Brother Philip are masters. They direct the good work of saving lost souls, and garner the harvest of freewill offerings. On the wall are several ugly chromos. One flaunts this inscription "Write that letter to mother tonight"; another, "where is my wandering boy tonight"; still another presents a man holding a loaf of bread in one hand. For their portion of that holy loaf of bread, come the vagrants, the outcasts, the imbeciles and idiots, temporarily redeemed prostitutes, forlorn cigar-butts and cigaret-ends of Capitalism.

A Missouri friend of mine once spent a night here. That night there were more unfortunates than space. My friend wrote a poem, and one line stands out vividly: "It seems that God made the bums too wide."



BROTHERHOOD

At three-thirty, I heard you, all togged out in your vestments, preach a sermon on brotherhood—hands across the seas, the entente of the races, and the great family of man. At four-thirty, on the platform of the village station, I saw you turn your back and walk away when a darky minister, hat in hand, approached you. And when the train came in, you went back to the parlor car, and your old gray head disappeared therein; and the darky went up to the smoker, and his old gray head disappeared therein. And the same train bore you both away somewhere, as the same spinning earth bears you both away somewhere, but in different compartments.

CLARENDO ROSS.

artillery pounded the ridge sector, pulverizing the earth so that when the November rains came the area was a sea of thin mud about four feet deep in parts. They built "duck-boards" on a roadbed of sandbags up to the front lines. One road up for supplies and the other down for walking wounded. Men coming down from the front, weakened from the loss of blood, staggered off the boards and drowned. Nobody knew what we'd do in case Heinie came for us over the ridge and forced a retreat; swim, the men guessed.

Into this nightmare of shells and mud and stinking corpses they sent our battalion—and Anderson. The outfit crept towards the front one black night. Green Verey flares sizzled up into torrents of rain lighting the way for us and reflecting deathly green in the sea of black mud. In the distance we heard the shrieks of wounded artillery horses.

We were a machine gun section. When we found our positions Anderson stretched out his rubber sheet and sighted his gun according to orders. We expected to go over the top just before dawn. How we were to plow through the mud God only knew. Shortly after midnight our lines were raked by a murderous artillery fire. The sky reflected the firework display of the heavy guns down below. The concussion made one's ears bleed. In a little while lines of silhouettes appeared against the night sky. They were coming!

In our trenches all was confusion and terror. On all sides machine guns went into action. Gaps began to appear in the lines of the black figures. They fell over like targets in a Coney Island shooting gallery. But the lines kept coming.

Our gun glowed red with heat. Anderson kept feeding fresh belts of ammunition to the gun which quivered and leaped like a living thing in torment. He was sweeping the battle area with a monotonous sweep. A flare lit up the scene and I saw him looking up to me, his lips moving. It was impossible to hear for the terrific noise. I put my ear to his mouth to hear what he was saying. I thought he might be wanting something.

He was praying! "Oh Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, look down upon me. . . ."

* * *

A few hours later we went over the top.

The official communique the next day read: "Advances at Passchendaele made at great cost. Ratio of casualties to gains high. Advances were insufficient for ultimate purpose."

Ultimate purpose. . . .

HOUSTON, TEX.:—6 WEEKS AFTER THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

"The tumult and the shouting dies and the Captains and the Kings depart"

But where are the contrite hearts?

A squat, deserted convention hall covering a whole block

Surrounded by dingy, ramshackle old houses.

Workmen watering the lawn and flowers in front of the hall.

A deserted hospitality house with signs denoting its service,

Soda pop, ice water, lunches, parking space, rest rooms, toilets.

In the distance, skyscrapers holding white collar slaves, hump

Shouldered bookkeepers and thin stenographers.

A skyscraper in the course of construction for Jesse H. Jones,

Democracy's great Babbitt. . . .

Steel armed men holding riveters which bump and clang on through

The day.

An old wrinkled woman selling midnight papers on the same corner

Every night.

Bronzed Irish cops mounted on sleek, groomed horses.

The First Baptist Church covering a block with an electric sign

On the roof, "Jesus Saves."

The sultry heat of the ship channel—a New York boat being

Unloaded of paint and varnish by hard muscled Negro long-

shoremen.

You see these are the things I have noticed, and which you who

Are far away do not know about now, because Houston is not on

The front pages of the newspapers any more. Its place has been

Taken by Maxwell Bodenheim and General Nobile and Gene

Tunney.

TRUETT VINSON.

GOMEZ: THE GREATEST LIVING CRIMINAL

By GUILLERMO MEIR

I will tell of my country: Venezuela, whose present regime of unthinkable cruelties and ingenious tortures has a parallel only in the Darkest Ages, in the Spain of Torquemada's Inquisition, in the bloody steppes of the Siberias of Nicholas.

First let me remind those who have forgotten their geography that the Republic of Venezuela, with an area of 393,000 square miles, lies at the nethermost part of South America. Universal history mentions her as the cradle of Simon Bolivar, the Liberator of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and founder of the Republic of Bolivia, whose statue now stands in the Central Park of Sweat Shop New York. The territory Bolivar liberated from the Royal Crown of Spain is now coveted by the Royal Dutch Shell, the Standard Oil Co. and all its magnanimous associates, for "uplifting and civilizing purposes," no doubt. This longing has rapidly increased, and is unbounded today: Venezuela ranks high in oil production in the world.

And now enters General Juan Vicente Gomez, the greatest living criminal. In 1908, President Cipriano Castro went to Berlin to have something superfluous removed from his anatomy. He left his lieutenant, General Gomez, in charge of Venezuela, as Provisional President. Having been a successful butcher in his little native town, perched in the Andes Mountains, Gomez accepted the task, and as soon as Castro was at a safe distance declared himself President, outlawing Castro. Thus began his reign. He enjoyed it, his friends and accomplices liked it, the people did not openly protest, and, since those who attempted to bring the country back to some semblance of order, peace and prosperity, were promptly removed to the world-famous dungeons of the ROTUNDA at Caracas, the Capital, or to the redoubtable Castles of PUERTO CABALLO and SAN CARLOS, Gomez has been undisputed autocrat for twenty years.

And, what is worse, since the great resources of oil were discovered around Lake Maracaibo, the hope has dwindled of removing Gomez. Through him, in auction-like bidding, the Oil Emperors, "for a certain consideration," have secured control of all the land they wanted, and the memory of man does not register the overthrow, in Spanish America, of the renegades who are under the protection of the American captains of Big Business.

The crimes and atrocities of Gomez and his hordes are unbelievable, except to those who lived under the benign and loving rule of the late czar. More than four hundred men who rank high in military and civil life, doctors, professors, writers, cartoonists have been arrested and without trial, accusation, or any legal procedure, thrown in the cells of the ROTUNDA and the two Castles already mentioned. There those who were not poisoned outright, were DELIBERATELY starved to death by the gaolers, tortured until the light of their minds left them. The majority of the survivors, with but scanty and rotten food, without medicine, light, or water to wash their seared and mangled bodies slowly found release in Death. . . .

When I state that hundreds were poisoned, starved or beaten to death, I swear by all that I hold dear, that it is the stark, unrelenting truth. I have the names, date, hour and manner of death of over eighty men, whose bodies, in serried ranks, grimly clamor for justice, and point towards their murderer: the present Government of Venezuela.

The imprisoning and assassination of these men was not always a political measure. Gomez's greediness and avarice is insatiable. He now owns or controls EIGHTY PER CENT of the industries of the country; the railroads, the steamship lines are his; factories, houses, ranches, the charcoal, bread, and dairy trusts, all are under his hand. There is no limit to his possessions, since his ambition and rapacity are unbounded, and no one dares to oppose the will of the Master. Death, lingering death, preceded by Dantesque tortures, the sequestration of his properties, and immediate persecution of all members of his family, is the only result of such a hopeless opposition. Through this humane and profitable method

President Gomez has gathered over TWO HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS—and there is no bootlegging in Venezuela.

Of those who enter the ROTUNDA, few, very few have been able to survive. One of them, General ROMAN DELGADO CHALBAUD, was recently liberated after living fourteen years in a cell only large enough to lie down in. That he managed to keep alive is a proof of the power of endurance of the human body. A few others still exist in their dungeons, after numberless years of dragging a SEVENTY-FIVE pound iron bar clamped around their legs, in the sea-moist cells, where neither sunshine nor human pity ever enter to dispel the blackness of their everlasting tortures.

Gomez's hypocritical treatment of the organized labor movement should be especially noted. The A. F. of L. recognizes Gomez as "a powerful pillar of Unionism." Yet the fact remains that in Venezuela there is no Labor Party (nor even of liberal tendency—they are not allowed); that workers' associations of any kind have been deprived of even the last vestige of freedom; that wages are pitiful and living conditions intolerable: The Colorado miners are Croesus next to our laborers.

Not even the army that timorously upholds Gomez is safe from his rapacity: entire regiments of the line toil daily in his haciendas, or break their backs building connecting roads, which will increase the profits of that boa constrictor. . . .

And as finale, here is another demonstration of his despotism: a few months ago several students in a festival sang an ode to Liberty, that sacred right about which we, of modern Venezuela, have heard, but whose blessings it has never been ours to enjoy. Thereupon FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHT boys, 16 to 20 years of age, were marched down, from early morning to nightfall, to the distant Castle at Puerto Cabello, to endure prison life with criminals of the worst species, while in Caracas, the Capital of the Republic, the protesting crowds of mingled people and the so-called aristocracy were terrorized with machine guns and trampled by cavalrymen. Thus "the velvet hand of the wise ruler," as seen and reported by the diplomatic menials to whom the righteous gesture of the populace was only "the senseless and unimportant pranks of a few schoolboys. . . ."

I repeat: I have spoken but the truth, a sad but necessary truth. Should anyone doubt my statements I gladly challenge him to prove me guilty of even a pardonable exaggeration. The veracity of my words is known wherever Spanish is spoken.

And the smoke of sacrifice MUST ascend, even though Gomez still be the blood-fed monster of Venezuela because of the unspeakable, of the criminal indolence of the governments of our brother nations who, unlike virile Mexico, maintain their friendly relations with the modern Attila, whose gory hands have clutched for two decades the reins of ruthless power in our fair and unhappy land of Venezuela.

FLAGWAVER

*When I get patriotic, I go on a big drunk.
Let me tell you—
Patriotism is a shot of snow, a whiff of opium,
A mouthful of rotgut strong enough
To eat the brass pants off a monkey.*

*Let me tell you—
When the flag waves in redwhiteblue frenzy,
When firecrackers pop capguns explode,
When fat men stand on platforms with thumbs hooked
Napoleon wise in lapels of their coats
Expounding landoffreemen,
Telling me America is my sweetheart,
I get patriotic as hell,
I go on the big drunk.*

*When I get patriotic, I go on the big drunk.
I cut Wesley Everest, I hang that black Injun
Frank Little from a bridge, I put Joe Hill
Against a wall and fill the lousy bastard
With hot jets of lead,
I break the foreign heads of strikers,
Them yella slackers, them chickenlivered
Bastards.*

*When I get patriotic, I go on a spree.
I go on the big drunk.*

JOSEPH KALAR.

OLD IRON SIDES—By ED MYERS [Miner]

THE HEROINE of Slack Row stood at the little red gate with her hair of proxide blond flying over her bare shoulders. Using a spotted Kimona as a flag was one of the ways she signaled the boys as they left the mine office with their pay for the camp to put a hot time on in the old town tonight as old Iron Sides put it. Or in other words to paint the town red she said, meant the old solid lucre to her. To induce the boys in, a gesture of her hand or the protruding of one of the lower branches of her anatomy through a hole in the gate where only a few nights ago she had torn the pickets off to sap an old fossil who had tried to wrestle her virginity from her, so she told the village squire after a drunken brawl with the driver boss of the old mine. Old Iron Sides usual appearance in good times was that of a Cleopatra, but in hard times she said, "It was hell to keep up appearances." Her usual hard tale she told, she said, she learned from the superintendent, and that was that there were lots of competition, it was as keen as a razor blade, but more so since Horse Shoe had come to town. The only way she could do, she said, was to do like the operators, and that was to reduce wages and sell lower; so she was going to cut the girls commision and reduce the prices to her regular costumers. Old Iron Sides said her only real

obstacle in business was her excess avoirdupois gained from the unknown quanity of the contents of pony kegs labelled Pabst Blue Ribbon, the'beer that made Milwaukee and the Socialists famous, and that she would have to abstain in accordance with the Eighteenth Amendment as the slim janes were capturing the miners pay envelopes these days. Old Iron Sides failure to overcome her obstacles become to look like a weather beaten tent in a five cent side show. Her proxide blond turned to a battle ship gray, and her teeth of pearls like the snags of an old decaying stump in an old battle ground, that had claimed as its victims many a follower of the alcholic path. Old Iron Sides spent her declining years going to church with the offspring of her old patrons, and doing her penance by throwing a few jitneys that recalled many a happy night as they rolled from her hand into the collection box. These old soverinors aquired as tips for keeping the girls a little later on pay nights were to pay for the sins she committed in the sowing of her wild oats. The roster in the church now recorded her as one of society and Mrs. Conlee wife of the president of the company union, but to all the old timers who had passed through the gate she was known as Iron Sides the Heroine of Slack Row.

T. B. WORKERS—By IRVING KREITZBERG

Joe was a veteran alright. He had made the rounds and had a host of friends among the patients of the Jewish tubercular sanatoriums in Denver and Los Angeles. Joe had been a sanatorium radical. Always a leader in the fight to keep the patients from degenerating into charity bums. He was on every grievance committee, whether it was to protest for better food or to plead with the Board for action on the rehabilitation program.

Joe kicked off rather unexpectedly. He had choked on a hemorrhage during the night.

The Bunch were grouped near the dining hall. As hemorrhages were now the vogue, each one was trying to tell the Bunch of his own particular hemorrhage. Every few words called for a jest and with each wise crack, a shrill, nervous laughter came from among them. They were trying to make lighter the sorrow they felt over the loss of their comrade.

Sam, who had been hanging around the office trying to get an earful, came towards them, galloping as fast as his one lung would permit him, crying excitedly, "The latest dope! The latest dope! Joe ain't got no one who claims his body. They're going to bury him in L. A."

The lawn immediately became a pandemonium. Shouts of "I'd like to go to the funeral." "Well I'm going!" "Lets all go!" "The bed patients can't go, though!" "Yes they can!" "No they can't!" were heard. The women patients had by this time joined the excited group and were shouting, "We want to go, too!"

The shouting now took the form of, "Get permission!" "How?" "Well, I knew him longer." "I knew him in Denver yet." "Yeh! we going?" "I want to be a pall bearer." "Joe was my roommate." "But we were friends." "So was I, I ought to be a pall bearer, too." "Elect a committee." "Let's find out how we're going first."

The committee came back to the anxious group with the information that all but the bed patients might attend the funeral. Joe was being buried by the "Federated" and besides the hearse the "Federated" was allowing only three cars.

"We can't all get into three cars," wailed a woman patient. "Old Man" Galosky began telling how when Louie Maysilver died in Denver, how the society women had loaned their cars. "Well, let's get them to loan it here," shouted someone. "Society women hell," cried Julie the Communist, "we'll bury our own dead." In almost perfect unison came the cry of, "that's right, we'll bury our own dead."

Suggestions came fast. Some one ventured, "Let's try and get the truck for one thing." "Naw!" replied another, "We're going to bury Joe right." "I'm willing to chip in" "Same here!" "Say, let's get Harry's old Chevie. He's an ex-patient and he'll lend it to us." "Sure and we'll hire the porter's flivver. "Find out if Nullman the tailor'll lend or hire out his car, will ya? I'll drive!"

The patients worked like Trojans and only a very few had to sit on others laps.

The hearse was first, followed by the three "Federated" cars. Then came a line of broken down, shabby, dilapidated cars of various cheap makes, each one crowded to the brim. But never was there any nobleman in the train of a king being buried in state, ever as proud as these consumptives on their way to, "Bury their dead."

The women were quietly weeping and the men were blowing their noses. The pall bearers were taking their places. "Old Man" Galosky who also had a tubercular hip and had to use a cane and Julie were on the left. Hyman and Melexer on the right. The procession from the hearse towards the open grave started slowly and solemnly. One or two of the women began to wail loudly. The procession had all the indications of being a successful one.

Unfortunately "Old Man" Galosky's cane, with each step, stuck into the soft earth and he began to stumble. By this time Julie, who was on the left side, but who should have been on the right, because his left lung was collapsed, due to pneumothorax, not now being able to change for his good lung side and the coffin becoming too heavy for him, used both arms. The jarring of the coffin gave Hyman a coughing fit. For a moment it seemed as if the coffin would fall. Warnings of, "Don't drop the coffin" were given. Faces were strained and hearts beat faster, but the procession kept on.

Two men leaning against a tree (grave diggers most likely) laughed. To them it must have been a comical scene. A procession of shrivelled consumptives led by the stumbling coughing pall bearers. It must have looked funny, for they laughed. Consumptive workers burying their dead! What a farce! Or-or, perhaps it was a tragedy. Perhaps it was a scene that needed only the guiding hand of a Raphael or a Michel Angelo. Perhaps it only needed the understanding hand of a master to create from it a great masterpiece. To give to the world a picture of a tragic phase of life among the lowly unfortunate.

The funeral was over. The Bunch was once again grouped about the dining hall. All that they might say about the funeral had already been said, so they took to the subterfuge of wise cracking to cover their feelings. Melexer began to sing,

"Oh it ain't the coughin that you do so often,
It's the coffin they carry you off'n."

"Old Man" Galosky for the fourth time cracked the old lunger's joke, "Say, we forgot to put a packel of asthma cigarettes in Joe's coffin." The Bunch laughed for the fourth time and began to scatter. Laughed and while laughing each one with heavy heart wondered how soon his turn would come to be buried without his "packel" of asthma cigarettes.

■ NEW RUSSIA'S HERO ■

Soviet Trade Unions, by Robert Dunn. Vanguard Press. \$50.

Soviet Trade Unions are playing a title role in the new Workers Republic. Robert W. Dunn reports on their activities in *Soviet Trade Unions*—one of the new Vanguard Press series on Soviet Russia.

Dunn's book covers the field very completely. A brief history of trade unions in Russia is followed by a description of union jurisdiction; of the workings of the union in a single factory; of the development of industrial unionism and of the inter-union relations. This completes the structure of the Soviet union system. Its nucleus is the factory, its widest scope is the entire Soviet Union, save where through the Red Trade Union International, the Amsterdam International, such temporary organizations as the Anglo-Russian Council or relief extended to British or Swedish strikers, Soviet Trade Unions co-operate with their fellow-workers in other countries of the world.

The book then takes up trade union activities. They are manifold.

First there is the collective bargain made between each union and its employer. The collective bargain or labor contract ordinarily covers a period of six months. Hours, wages, working conditions are usually included in its provisions.

There are labor disputes in the Soviet Union. There is also an elaborate machinery for settling labor disputes. Dunn describes both. He also discusses strikes under the Soviets.

Other sections of *Soviet Trade Unions* are devoted to the relations between the Unions and the government; the relations between the union and the Communist Party; the relation between the unions and production; the relations between the unions and cultural-educational work. Extensive details are given covering all of these fields so that the reader feels that he has had a real look in on the work of the Soviet Trade Union.

Again there is a section dealing with self-criticism; the stimulation of rank and file activity; the development of the shop committee and of economic democracy and the successful enlistment of young men and women in trade union work.

American trade unionists accustomed, as most of them are, to visiting their locals occasionally and to participate, in a strike when demands cannot be secured in any other manner would be amazed at the variety of functions which are being taken up by the Soviet unions.

Here is no old-world institution adapted to Soviet needs, but a new institution under an old name. The 1,200,000 "actives," that is, trade union members serving on committees or doing some other specified work in connection with their unions, are one of the most important factors in the staging of the trade union scene in the vast Soviet drama. The 10,000,000 trade union members in the Soviet Union organized in their 23 industrial organizations are working along lines which seem necessary for the economic and cultural advancement of themselves and of those dependent upon them.

SCOTT NEARING.



Drawn by Louis Lozowick

Can Jesus Save?
Religion and Social Justice, by Sherwood Eddy. Doran. \$1.50.

Here is a book which deserves a better ending. With commendable diligence, it surveys most of the major evils of our social order. Throughout it promises to reveal the spiritual dynamic necessary to change the individual and thereby transform society. But in the end, it leaves us with a forlorn feeling that we have been served only with one more rehash of an old dish.

Mr. Eddy's great discovery is that the hope of society lies in religion. By religion he refers not to the church, the sycophantic church accommodating its preachings to the dictates of a capitalistic state, but to a gospel of social justice, requiring of the individual a re-awakening to the significance of the golden rule and the simple teachings of Jesus. Impelled by this spiritual reincarnation, men will rush to right the wrongs they have done; wealth will be redistributed on an equal basis; race prejudice, child-labor, war, unhappy marriage, the liquor problem, prostitution, the threat of over-population—all will be swept away.

Here is optimism unbounded! To repose one's faith in a religious revival as the solvent for all social evils is to reveal a naivete which could trust in the return of the horse as a means of transportation.

The methods whereby the great social changes are to be brought about are not discussed. Neither does it emerge in what respects our institutions are to be transformed when the purification of the individual

is complete. But the book's most flagrant lack is the fact that Mr. Eddy has no message for the victims of our present social order regarding their conduct until the millennium. Presumably, their status quo is to be retained until the forces of evolution and education have brought about their liberation.

The book may be valuable as a tract for the graduating college crusader intent upon exposing evils which have long since been laid bare; but as a serious reply to the eternal "What shall we do?" about our social ills, it is negligible. Mr. Eddy is hunting dragons with an air rifle and fishing for whales with a drop line.

DAVID SAPIRSTEIN.

Aristocratic Verse

Mr. Pope, and other poems, by Allen Tate. Minton, Balch. \$2.

To call Mr. Tate a minor poet is not to deny his talent. His vision and his emotions are limited, and his art narrow, but within the confines of his chosen field he is always interesting, and sometimes brilliant.

Throughout his verse there runs a peculiar irony, a sardonic coldness. Of passion, sympathy, humanity, there is less than little, but those who look for strictness and restraint will find much to praise. He is preeminently the analytical intellect; never the seer, never the trumpeter of old sorrows and new hopes. At times he is self-conscious, and a certain tightness, a taut straining of image leaves one with a sense of aloofness. He is precious. He is a jeweller considering the stark gleams of a flawless diamond.

This is aristocratic verse. It fits the mood of the monocled cultured dilettante remote from life. Despite its values, it is impermanent.

BERNARD SMITH.

New Playwrights

The third season of the New Playwrights Theatre will begin early in November. A reorganization has taken place and Em Jo Basshe, one of the founder-directors will act as Executive Director. Edward Massey and Paul Sifton have been elected to the board of directors and they, along with John Dos Passos, Michael Gold, Francis Edwards Faragoh and John Howard Lawson will serve in an advisory capacity.

"Airways, Inc." by John Dos Passos and a revised version of "Singing Jailbirds" by Upton Sinclair will be among the plays to be produced.

The rest of the plays will be chosen from several manuscripts now under consideration. The New Playwrights Theatre is particularly interested in the work of young writers and invites them to send in their efforts.



Drawn by Louis Lozowick

POEMS BY WORKERS

A Waiters' Poem

Two animals push their bellies across a white-cloth table.
 A male with lobster-colored jowls
 And large shares of Standard Oil preferred.
 A hard-boiled female in red satin
 With finger nails polished for gold digging,
 And lips smeared and set for loveless kisses.
 I've got to slop these hogs,
 To fatten them for slaughtering their fellows,
 To keep them raising the lash against your folks and mine,
 To keep them bleeding the guts out of your kids and mine.
 But I must scrape and bow very politely.
 Thinking of a red to-morrow,
 I slop these hogs very politely.
 Damn their hides!

TONY FERRO.

The Office

"Gentlemen, we have your order,
 Shipment will be made.
 Trusting it will reach you promptly,
 By express, prepaid."

Twenty-five desks and dictaphones,
 Twenty-five shaded lights,
 An hour for lunch and double pay
 For working nights.

Twenty-five typewriters, banging away,
 The clang of a stamp machine,
 And the filtering light of a sunny day
 Through the slats of a window-screen.
 Twenty-five dresses at ten dollars each,
 Hose at a dollar a pair,
 Lingerie added to last month's bill,
 And grabbed from a bargain square.

Outside, the soot on the building is gray,
 And gray are the streets and men;
 The hurrying traffic shrieks and stops,
 And then moves on again.
 The street cars clatter, the newsboys cry,
 Black smoke covers a smoky sky,
 And hour after hour the traffic goes by,
 While twenty-five girls behind their desks,
 Are straining tired eyes,
 And the afternoon mail brings letters for
 Another day's replies.

There's a city where a prairie used to be,
 And a tall, stone building where an old oak tree
 Was heavy with the snow. There's a busy street
 By a river where the redhaws once were sweet,
 The floors are tiled in the great stone bank,
 Over a stream where buffalo drank,
 And the pavement lies hard on the plain's broad back
 That once felt the print of the buffalo track.

Where twenty-five girls in an office lock
 Twenty-five desks at five o'clock,
 A dark-haired squaw sang a quaint melody
 To a papoose swung from a maple tree.

HELENE MARGARET.

The Revolutionary Poet

The struggles of wage slaves
 Cooped in roaring, dirty factories,
 Swinging picks in gassy coal mines,
 Battling with the hungry seas,
 Sowing, reaping on the prairies,
 Are in the songs I sing.
 Mine are no parlor verses
 Full of honeyed rhymes and dainty sentiments.
 I would be a March blast rattling the musty structure of society
 And freshening the toilers in the hell-holes
 With promise of the summer of the world.

WALTER SNOW.



Woodcut by Justino Fernandez

Design for a Book

Dreams

He sat at the mouth of the mine-shaft
 With only his eyes alive in the coal-blackened face.
 An open magazine was in his lap.
 A bathing beauty on a Rivera beach.
 His thumb a smudge of black against the paper skin,
 And blue sky from which a glossy sun threw shafts of brilliance
 At the Apollos and Aphrodites sporting in the shimmery waves.
 In the rims of coal dust, his eyes dreamed until the whistle blew.
 Then up jerked his hand and the golden scene
 Landed on a heap of rusty wires and rotted planks,
 As he joined the descending shift.

S. PETERS.

Trinity Church

It stands at the head of the Octopus Wall Street
 Untouched so they say, by its tentacles.
 Its humble spire a beacon
 For hundred-percenters
 Who fail in the street.
 Skyscrapers look greedily down
 Seeming to question its right of way.
 But even an Octopus knows its place
 And is willing to sacrifice a greedy tentacle
 To a dialectical St. George,
 Who compromises
 His sword for a book,
 Ignorance for gold,
 A slave for a slave.

HAROLD E. BRIGGS.

A BOOK

for Proletarians and Radicals

THE HEALERS

By DR. B. LIBER

A unique, extremely original story of an ideal, almost impossible, struggling truth-seeking physician, who at last leaves his practice and becomes a tramp. Many phases from his most intimate life, his childhood, sex development, love and disappointment are told. But it is mainly an exact description of all the healing professions and quacks, with many details about their shortcomings and criminal practices and a relentless picture of the **social background of disease**.

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"Smashing attack against the entire practice of medicine as it exists today. . . . Recalling the Jeremiads of the old Hebrew prophets. . . . More absorbing than any detective story."

". . . This sounds like crankery, but Dr. Liber is really quite sensible, just a bit too sanguine and his book makes interesting reading."

"Each page is a gem, thrillingly interesting, fiction style, but such blistering truths offered that one is amazed at the stupidity and crudeness of the human race. . . . From the writer emanates a golden glamor of idealism. . . . The leading figure, whose career from childhood, medical training, the first bitter entrance into his professional life, his romance, disappointment, all exquisitely pictured. . . . The heart of a musician, the soul of a poet, the conception of an artist, the brain of a philosopher, the perspective of a scientist. . . . Some parts remind us of Tolstoy—down in the dregs of life which we want to ignore. . . . See life as it is, stripped of stains and silks. . . . Like an oak on the high cliff, storm beaten by the opinion of all healers, the author stands, challenging the world. He favors no one. With the larger good of the suffering public in mind the book is courageous and combative."

FROM READERS.

"A revelation. I wish it could reach every one of our suffering humanity."—"The book of the century. Not merely true, interesting and educational, but a great inspiration for a better and more useful life."—"An excellent novel. The hero is a character portrayal without parallel in American literature."

From Dr. O. G., one of the most prominent men in his specialty:

"Your book is wonderful. It certainly reflects marvelously the kaleidoscopic mirror of medical life. Had the profession at large followed you as their pioneer, we would have no more abuses and fakes. I admire your courage to continue this uneven struggle against the Demigods of science."

From DR. JAMES P. WARBASSE, prominent surgeon, author and leader of the American co-operative movement:

"This book is highly informative and interesting. . . . The doctors will not like it because of the fulsome criticism of their profession. . . . Its chief value will be to those who are interested in the **sociology and economics of medicine** and the problems of medical practice. . . . There is too little criticism of the modern practice of medicine from the inside. You place the medical profession under obligations to you for your wise and helpful criticisms."

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ATIONAL LIVING

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Woodcut by Justino Fernandez

LETTERS FROM WORKERS

Confessions of a Recruit

Sunday in Chicago, 1914, a stiff wind blows from the lake, it is cold.

South State Street is deserted, except for a few homeless stiffs, halfstarved and soiled street-walkers and a few partly frozen newsboys crying out, "War with Mexico!" "War with Mexico!"

Just then I passed by a recruiting sign. That army life must be pretty soft, no work, just wigwagging with a couple of flags, charging on spirited horses and an imaginary foe, parades, all in nice clean uniforms. No punching of clocks, punch-presses, lays and dull presses, no bosses looking down your collar. Did not have any idea that those posters might be misleading. Again I hear the newsboys cry out, "Mexican bandits raid U. S. ranch!" "War"—just then an elevated railway drowns out the rest.

For some time I had slaved in a machine shop, all day other slaves and myself held plates of tin and punched out square discs, round discs, oblong discs, with square holes in the center. It was piece-work, so much for the first hundred thousand and then so much more per thousand. I made as much as eleven dollars per week. Many could not make the first hundred thousand in the required time. They soon tramped in the Chicago slush going from shop to shop to have the doors slammed in their faces or read signs with "No help wanted." The day before a German whose punch press was next to mine had slipped on the oily floor and lost his equilibrium. His right hand also slipped under the stamper just when it came down. Some of the men ran towards him, held him up. He looked at the stump of his hand with a surprised expression, then mercifully fainted away. He had told me that he had been in America two years. He had sold his little farm in the Bavarian Alps to his brothers and emigrated to the land of the plenty in the hope of becoming rich.

Yes, I decided, I would enlist. In the cavalry I would go. So the next morning I laid in bed until the pale light of a grey day forced itself through the dirty and single window of my room.

Went to the shop told the boss I was going to quit and wanted my money, I was told to come back next Wednesday, which was payday. I had decided to enlist that day, so I told him to go to hell.

The recruiting staff was very friendly. They asked my age, where I was from, could I read and write a little English (I was then a greenhorn), and if I had my first citizenship papers. To that question my reply was negative, but that was easily fixed, all I needed was a dollar. So I went to the federal building, told them what I wanted and a few minutes later I was initiated into the first steps of American citizenship.

When I returned to the recruiting station, several other "prospects" were in the room, all asking questions. Most of them looked hungry and shabby. One was well-dressed but had a haunted look and spoke from the corner of his mouth, another was a cockney, slim and mean-looking. I asked him a friendly question, he snarled at me, we all left him alone.

After a physical and literary examination a sergeant took us all to a rather clean restaurant, we then had a good fifty-cent meal. So far everything was fine. That same evening, in charge of one who had re-enlisted, about twenty-eight recruits including myself left Chicago for Jefferson Barracks. We passed the night talking about our future life, some seemed to know a great deal about it. During the night I noticed that our gang was getting smaller. The next morning when we arrived at St. Louis we discovered that about ten men had deserted us during the night. We then had breakfast at the Union Station, that was the last good meal at government expense.

Jefferson Barracks, a large government reservation, skirts the Mississippi River, no doubt it is attractive in its way in the summer time; but my first impression was a little less than cheerful. I then realized that I had made myself a prisoner for the next seven years, if I behaved I was told by someone who knew, I would have the privileges of a trusty in a civilian penitentiary.

CHARLES BRUCHEZ.

The Morning Revolution

Outside the sun rose, its golden rays beamed through the long and narrow window shutter opening into a grotesque chamber where my friend the shoe operator was fast asleep in bed. The sunbeams first fell upon his bed and then slowly moving up to his face and it began warming him. But the repeating painful sounds of the rusty nickel clock woke him with terror, it rong the cursing sixth hour, damn, it is the hour to prepare for the slaving shoe factory! Madly he rose, jumped out of bed and ran towards the window and flung the shutter open. Waves of sunlight forced himself in and illuminated every dark and dreary corner in the chamber. Light fell upon his enormous bookcase, upon his table full of scribbled papers and upon his hand-painted pictures hanging on the wall. He stared amazingly through the window, his eyes met all glories of nature. After a moment staring he said to me very passionately;

"Look through the window Max, there is joy, ah, I hear the songs of the early morning birds, I feel the breeze blowing gently over me, over the full grown grass, over the blossoming trees and over the colourful flowers. That's all beautiful, that's all marvelous to look upon, but damn, the cursed factory prohibits me to look at it longer. For I must go to my slaving job, to the dark, dusty, chaotic factory, where 210 men and women are engaged at the rusty machines, hustling fast and hustling faster shoes, slippers, belts, buckles and laces when the ugly beast manager drowses near. They slave breathlessly 10 hours and earning \$2.50 per day."

My friend rose violently his right hand and clenched his fist and resumed.

"Oh bourgeois circle what a mass of scoundrels and unimaginable rats you are! You exploit the workingmen because they yield for food. You rob their freedom, rights and souls. You starve them, you fill their hearts with dust and their minds with poison because you have conquered that ruthless burning thirst for 'money and more money!'"

He paused, suddenly a sad expression covered his face as he looked at the nickel clock.

"Hell" he said as if speaking to himself, it's already seven o'clock, the factory whistle blew, I am late, I must go. I will for the last time look through the window. The sun shines brighter, the birds sing louder, everything is more pleasant. The sun, the hot sun, were it not made to shine for us all?

And yet it shines for the well-fed rich and for us shines clouds of dust everywheres, why is it?

"I forgot, hell, it's late, I must go to the factory to my rusty machine! I must leave everything behind me, the books unstudied, the poem unwritten, the pictures unpainted and all kisses for my dear love unbeknownst. All my love, wisdom and art I long wished to express dies in me gradually day after day. Instead of expressing them I am compelled to lose myself in slavery, in darkness, for whom? For my love and me for our future happiness? No! No! I see nothing but death. It's for the bourgeois I slave and for no one else, for the masses, for the thieves, for the scoundrels who suck my blood daily. For them I slave? Down with them all! Enough, I shall slave no more! Today I must mark my comrades and my freedom! Today the bourgeois wretches will hear the slaves voices crying for freedom. Yes this very minute I must run to the factory to my slaving comrades and speak to them of freedom and if the ugly hypocrite manager will interfere I will slash his head off! I will speak to them and they will listen!"

Thus my friend spoke that morning. In the chamber the nickel-clock struck eight, outside a gentle breeze stirred the green leaves while my friend with a mocking laughter ran fast to the shoe factory.

MAXWELL MAZER.

The Benzine Room

Dear Comrade:

Enclosed you will find a piece which is a description of the place in which I work, sometimes as much as fourteen hours a day at the enormous rate of fifty cents an hour. I have started not long ago and I do not know how long I can keep it up, but we shall see. I do not know whether the piece is technically poetry, but it has the smell of benzine, and I want other workers to know how it feels to work in a benzine room under union conditions administered by right wing socialists, but of that some other time. If you find it suitable for publication in the New Masses, well and good, if not I hope that you will let me know the reason. It might be of some help in the future.

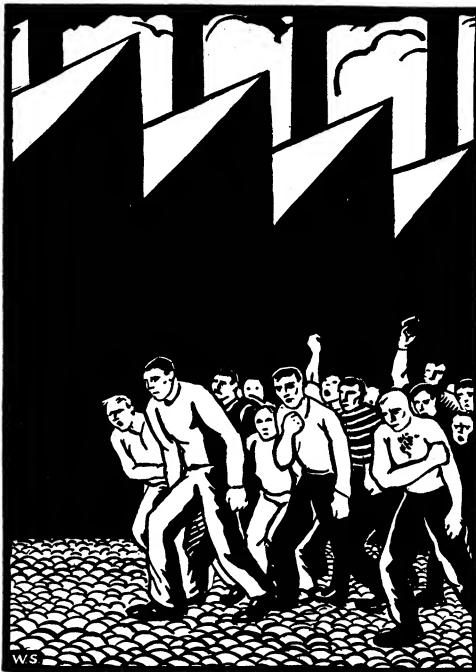
Comradely yours,
Leon Nasof.

THE BENZINE ROOM

Lonely sound my foot-falls at midnight,
Leading to the benzine room;
Weary are my steps at noon when
I drag an aching body home
From work in the benzine room,
The benzine room in the cleaning shop
Down by the East River side.
An old black, red-brick ruin, where
Gray shadows trudge the path to the grave.
Ashen faces, hollow cheeks,
Against shiny bulging machines;
Hands lift wearily,
Booted feet drag on the wet floor;
Machines splash merrily,
Without their power with dinning grating noise.

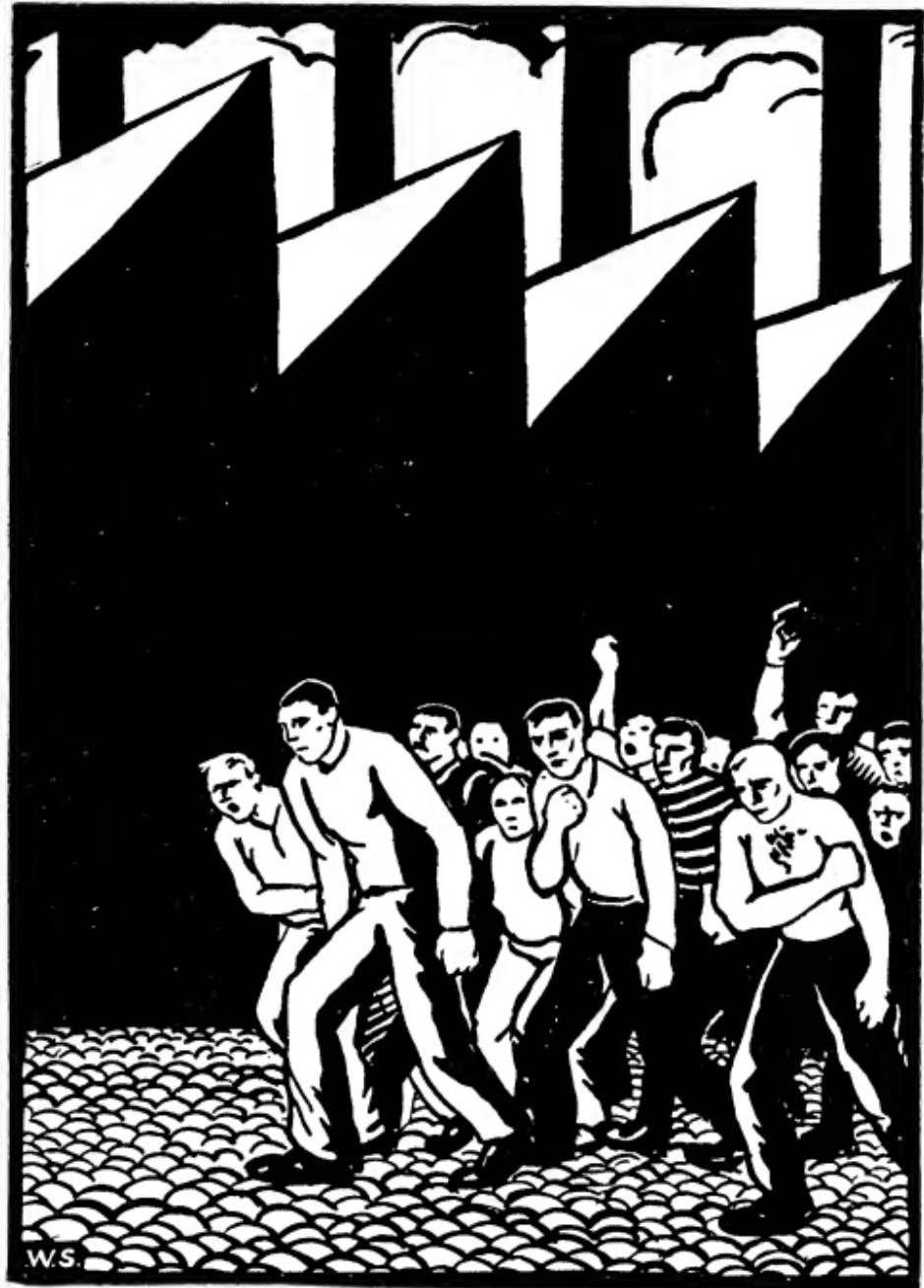
"Open the valve," the foreman shouts,
"Give her a clean strong drink of benzine,
Give her a plate of fat soap to eat,
Give her ammonia, more soap!"
—One whiff cuts my breath and
Sends a sizzling pain to my head—
How she waltzes merrily,
How she dashes merrily!

"Open, empty machine number one!"
We pull the dripping clothes from the belly of the machine, as the butcher
Boys pull the intestines from the belly
Of a freshly slaughtered ox.
With blinded eyes, choking breath,
Hands soaking in benzine,
Sweat and benzine soaked body,
Quickly moving shadows twist and
Bend and dance around the machine:
Taste of benzine in mouth, in stomach,
Benzine in air, in food, in drink;
Life is a sea of benzine!



Drawn by Wm. Siegel

Strike!



Drawn by Wm. Siegel

Strike!

SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR

By C. HARTLEY GRATTAN

The New York Times for June 17th carried the news that the white trade unions of South Africa had again refused to affiliate with the native union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa. The fact may be news but the situation it reflects hardly leads one to expect anything else. The native workers cannot hope to join with the white workers on any program short of a complete revision of South African economy. The natives are the exploited class, and the white workers, to maintain their present favored position, have had to ally themselves with the exploiting class against the natives. Consequently the white trade unionists are in the anomalous position of being both exploited by the white capitalists and being themselves exploiters of their native fellow workers.

This situation all grows out of the fact that in South Africa every white man must perforce be an aristocrat. An overwhelming black population (the proportion is four blacks to one white) makes the white worker feel it necessary to think more of maintaining white solidarity than of relieving all laboring men of their "chains." Race consciousness overrides economic idealism. The white unionists use every opportunity to weaken their own chains, but they are as keen to keep the natives chained as the exploiting class. The white unionists will even assist in getting the chains fastened tighter.

They did so in 1926 when they combined with the Hertzog government to pass the so-called Color Bar Bill. This bill is designed to keep the natives "where they belong" — and that, to follow Lord Olivier and Professor W. M. Macmillan, is in slavery. Specifically the bill was aimed to keep the natives from entering the skilled occupations regarded by the whites as uniquely theirs. The natives have shown themselves capable of operating complex machinery and of learning the trades. If their capabilities were allowed untrammeled development it is altogether probable that they could carry on the entire industrial system of South Africa, excepting perhaps the managerial and technical ends.

They are not going to be allowed to make any progress in this direction for the simple reason that in doing so they would menace the position of the white workers. The natives must stick to native work and accept native pay. (Or in South African terms, "Kaffir work for Kaffir pay.") That is the reason why any affiliation between white and native unions is an impossibility.

The difference between white pay and native pay is tremendous. The native worker in agriculture receives from fifteen to twenty shillings a month (four to five dollars), rations, a hut which he erects himself, and certain privileges on the farm. He is practically the only farm laborer. The white man cannot live on such wages. In the mines the condition is even more nakedly exploitative. Setting aside the administrative force and so on, it takes about 15,000 whites to operate the mines. Under them are 200,000 natives. The average white wage per shift is eighteen shillings six pence (about \$4.50). The average native wage is two shillings eight pence (about \$.64 if the cost of rations and housing are included). The maximum cash wage that can be paid a native per shift is two shillings two and four-fifths pence (\$.35). On an average the white man's wage is seven times that of the native. Where the natives drive machines under a white man's direction the proportion is ten to one and upwards. The high white wages are based on sweated black labor.

The white unionists, then, must keep the native worker down to keep their own wages up. A rapprochement between the two is almost unthinkable. Some economists, riding over the racial barrier roughshod, have argued, with obvious good sense, that native wages should be slowly raised to something approaching the white level so that the native purchasing power will be increased and the whole of South African industry, in consequence, be expanded and put on a more sound basis. As it is the natives are a producing class only. As consumers they are negligible.

The white unionists cannot see the point in that argument. They in common with the rest of the South Africans, are afraid of the natives. They prefer to guard their rights by assisting in repressing the natives. If, as it is alleged, the native unions are making progress and developing highly intelligent leadership, the white South African unionists may be forcibly jockeyed out of their absurd position. Then they will ask the natives to affiliate with them—and probably be refused. On that day a genuine workers' movement will come to the fore in South Africa, and Moscow will get what it was astonished not to get in 1925—a Negro to represent the South African laboring class.

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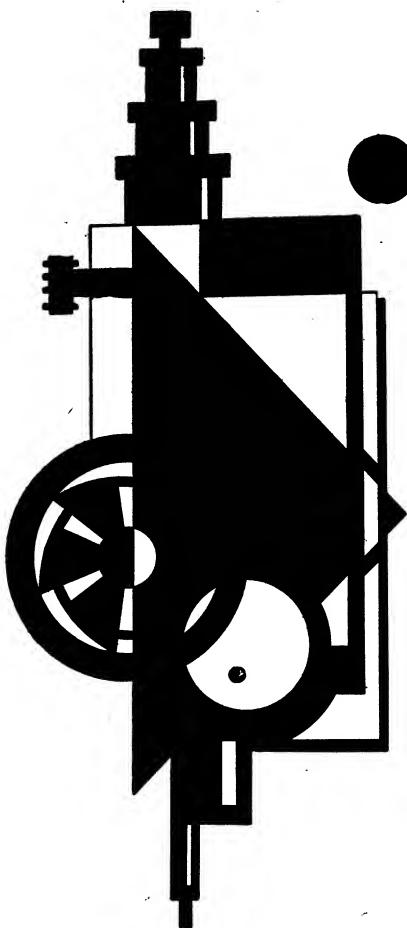
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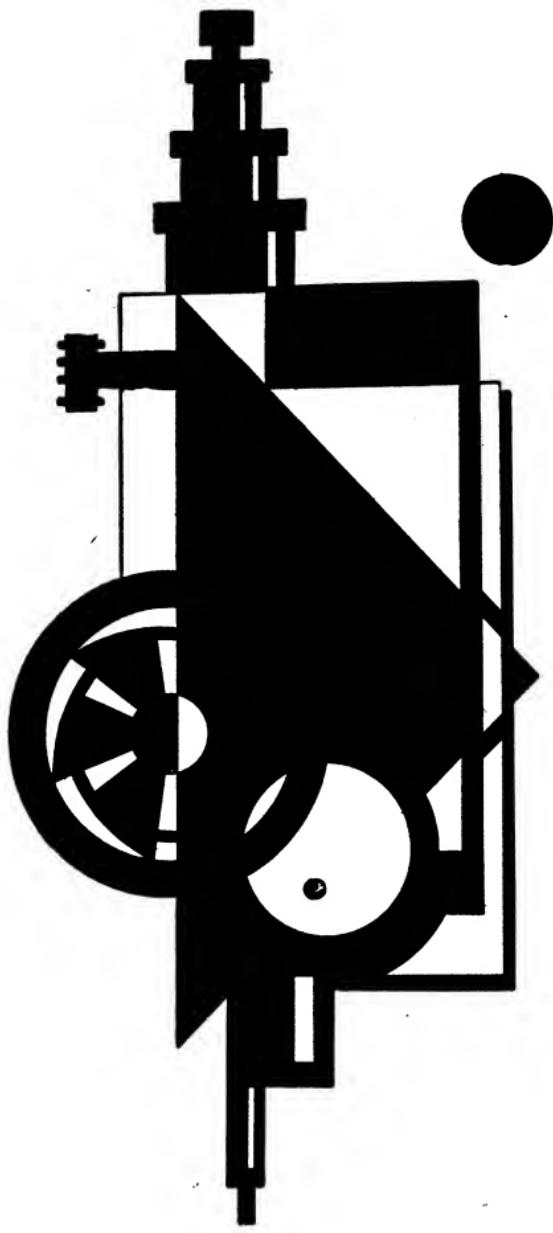
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